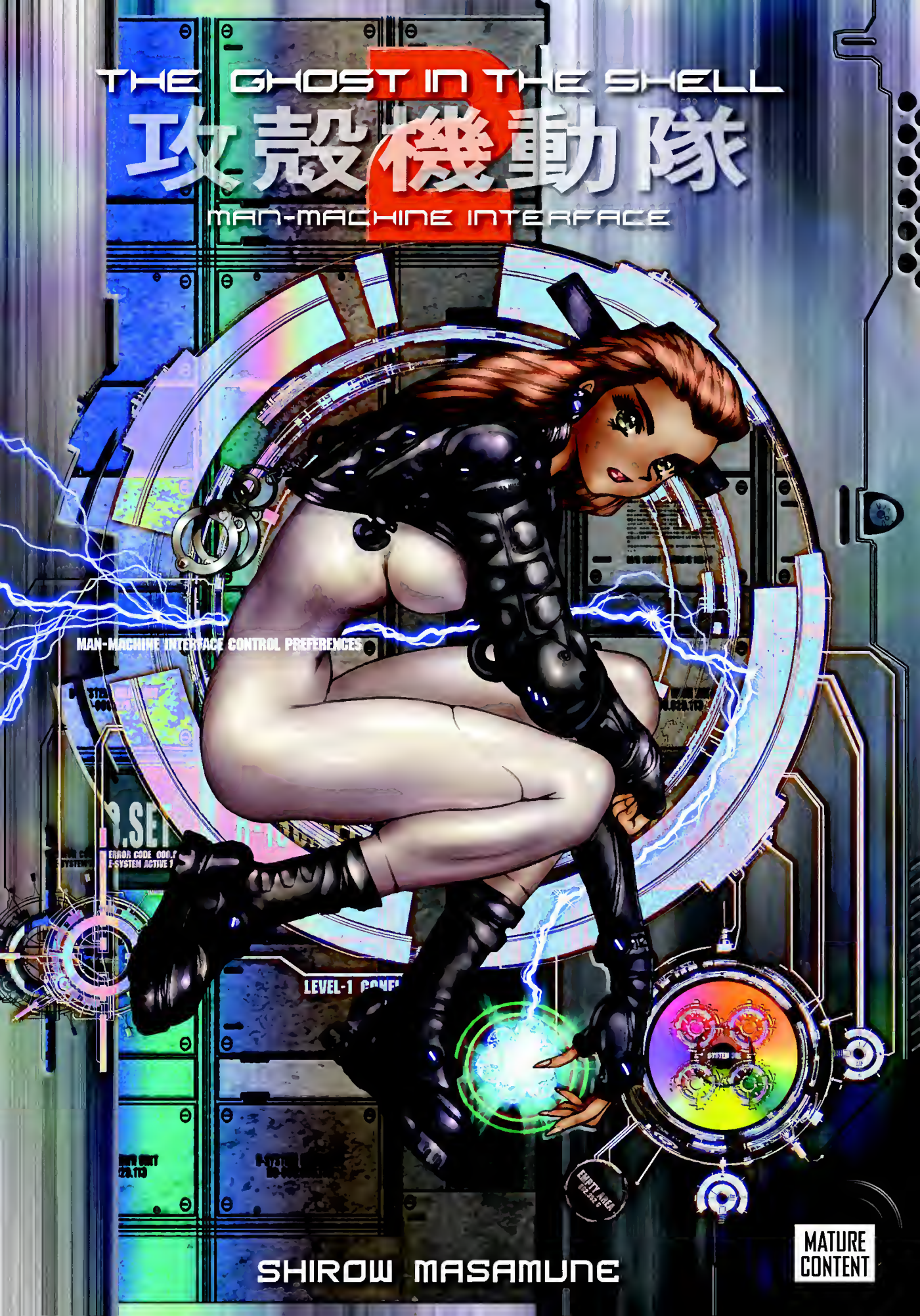
# THE GHOST IN THE SHELL 2

# 攻殼機動隊

## MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE




SHIROW MASAMUNE

MATURE CONTENT

# THE GHOST IN THE SHELL 2
## MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE
# 攻殻機動隊2

STORY AND ART BY
SHIROW MASAMUNE

KC
KODANSHA COMICS

Ghost in the Shell 2
KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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First edition: July 2010

First published in Japan in 2001 by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.
Electronic Publishing rights for this English edition arranged through Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.

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English digital edition published by Kodansha Advanced Media, LLC, San Francisco.

www.kodanshacomics.com

ISBN: 9781682334515
Digital Edition: 1.0.0

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Original series editor: Koichi Yuri, Junji Seki
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2
OPEN
MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE CONTROL PREFERENCES

# WARNING: READ ME FIRST!

Readers may note that certain panels seem to have been inadvertently left unreversed or have incongruous backwards lettering. These were artistic decisions made by Mr. Shirow during the production of the mirror-imaged foreign edition of *Man-Machine Interface*. — Dark Horse Comics and Studio Proteus

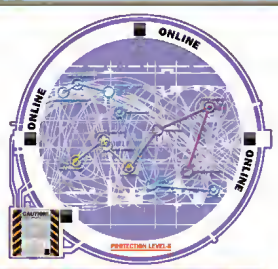
The various situations, explanations, and concepts that appear in this book are a product of my wild imagination, a form of entertainment with no connection to reality. Take according to directions, and enjoy. Be advised that the author assumes no responsibility for any collateral damage resulting from improper use of the various constructs, fabrications, and gimmicks in the story.

## APOLOGIES AND CORRECTIONS

In the *Ghost in the Shell* graphic novel published in 1991, the heroine, Motoko Kusanagi, fused with a self-described "intelligent life-form" and left Section 9 of the Public Security Bureau. This story takes place approximately four years and five months later. As a result, this story is quite different from what was originally called *Ghost in the Shell* and featured Public Security's Section 9 (the Special Assault Force). I thought of visually differentiating the new Japanese title from the old one by merely changing the last kanji character, from one that means "military unit" to the homophonic kanji for "body" or "form" (which would shift the meaning of "mobile force" or "riot squad" to something like "mobile-unit-body-entity"), but for a variety of reasons I decided not to do so. To those readers expecting a direct continuation of the prior storyline, I apologize and beg for your understanding.
I'm sorry, folks!

— Shirow Masamune

Motoko is a hyper-advanced cyborg—her body consists of all of her active drives; her memory of all of her active sources. These are all variable, but on a periodic basis her bio-components crave energy and sleep and remind her of her basic identity-layer. To her, the physical world and the world of information are both reality. All existence is life, destined to continue for the unforeseeable future.



# 攻殻機動隊2 KOUKAKU KIDOUTAI

# MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE

This is a conceptual representation of the largest e-brain network Motoko can perceive, or sense. It's a complex intertwining of tendrils in what appears to be a tree-like structure, but it is actually too large to grasp in its totality. Far, far off in the distance three giant lights are shining, functioning almost like a North Star. Motoko has tried several times to move closer to them but had no success as they are too far away...and something seems to block her progress. The three lights consist of two giant orbs and one that is about twenty percent smaller and of a different nature. There are always extremely active visual phenomena, like lightning or solar prominences, flaring back and forth among the lights.

MASAMUNE SHIROW

## 01 PROLOGUE

2035.03.06.AM05:05

"CRYSTALLIZATION" here refers to a state where complexity is no longer increasing.

JIZAITEN here refers to a temporal and spatial concept of the structure of the universe. It is represented by the image (or, more accurately, the reflection in the spirit realm) of three "tree" or "forked" structures, called *sansagi*. There are sixty-four strata of irreversibly ordered elements that move in precise sequence about the three trees, and one full cycle of their movement is equivalent to the life of the universe. It's certainly one of the more unique concepts to come out of the human brain.

MDF: Marine Defense Force

N13°10'32.9 E148°22'45.6
LOCATION: ON THE OPEN SEA, 153 MINUTES FROM THE CONTROL AREA OF THE FLOATING CITY OF POSEIDON.
SPEED: FIFTEEN KNOTS.

!
ROCKY, CONAN... RECHECK THE E-BRAIN PROTEC-TION SETTINGS.
IF EVERY-THING'S OKAY, I WANT YOU TO SCAN FOR A *WHITE TANUKI* ON THE DECK...
A WHA...?!
SETTINGS ALL OKAY. "WHITE TANUKI"...THAT SOME KIND OF CODE NAME?
NO, A *REAL* TANUKI, A "RACCOON DOG"...! YOU KNOW, LIKE THE ONES IN PICTURE BOOKS OR ANIMALS..?
JUST DO THE SCAN!

It's easy to shrug off psychic phenomena as being "unscientific," but assuming the person experiencing them isn't totally faking it, it's probably more scientific to consider such experiences in psychological or neuro-physiological terms. They could, for example, be considered the result of "naturally-occurring magnetic or electrical phenomena that affect the brain," or they could be analyzed as a type of "mass hypnosis," etc. It's unscientific to laugh off poorly understood phenomena instead of trying to analyze them.

THE DOCTOR'S SHIP IS SURFACING...
IT'S THE SAME TYPE AS BEFORE-- THE SEVENTH *SPB* DELIVERED TO THE U.S. NAVY IN FISCAL 2026 BY *NMD, INC.*
DOES THE NAVY STILL THINK THEY ORDERED AND PURCHASED SIX?
LEMME CHECK. HEH, HEH...
MAYBE WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE *OUR* PURSUER A BIT, AND SEE HOW HE RESPONDS.
THERE'S A RESIDUAL DISPLAY-CONVERSION PROGRAM IN *NMD*'S CORE E-BRAIN. SHALL WE DELETE IT FOR THEM?
THAT JUST WARNS OF PURSUERS. LEAVE IT ALONE.

Normally the Robotic Reconnaissance Vehicles (RRVs) would be flying further apart, but I put them close together because it makes for a better illustration.

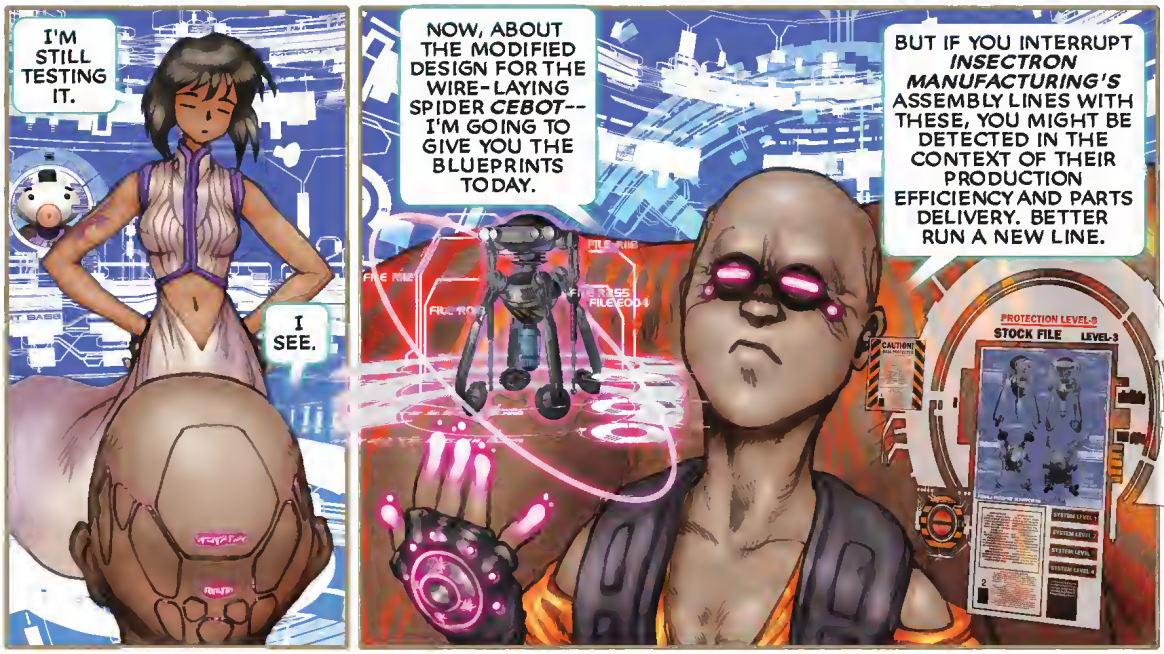
Military ships in this era are semi-submersible in style, with the upper bulwarks done in "dazzle ships" camouflage (against satellites and anti-sub craft). In emergencies, smaller ships surface and move at high speed on hydrofoils, usually using solar power generators. Many have catamaran hulls and magnetic propulsion systems. Here, the Doctor seems to be demonstrating to Motoko that he means no harm.

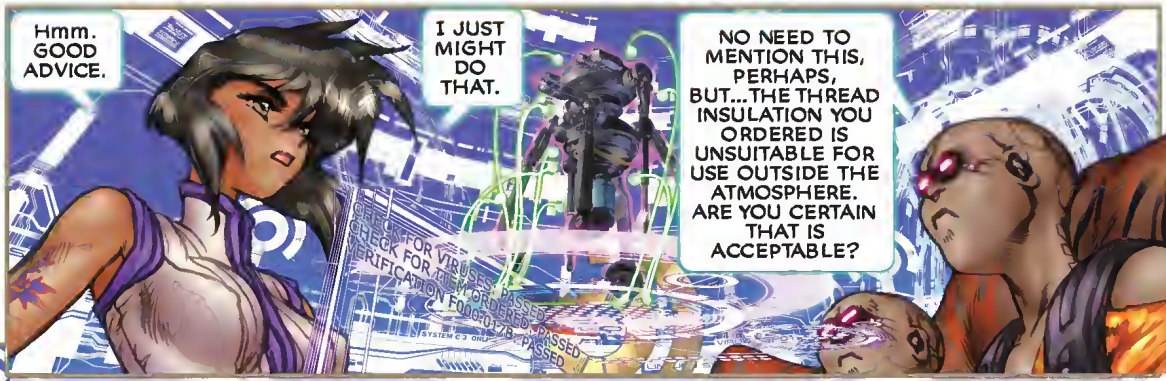
WARHEAD
193km/h
TARGETING SYSTEM ACTIVE
SPLASH

HOW COME HE ALWAYS LIKES TO WIRE UP?
IT'S SURE *WEIRD*...
*LEX! CONAN!* SET BODY SECURITY LEVEL AT EIGHT.
YES'M!
DO A SCAN AND START RECORDING AT LEVEL SEVEN!
WELL.
GOOD TO SEE YOU.

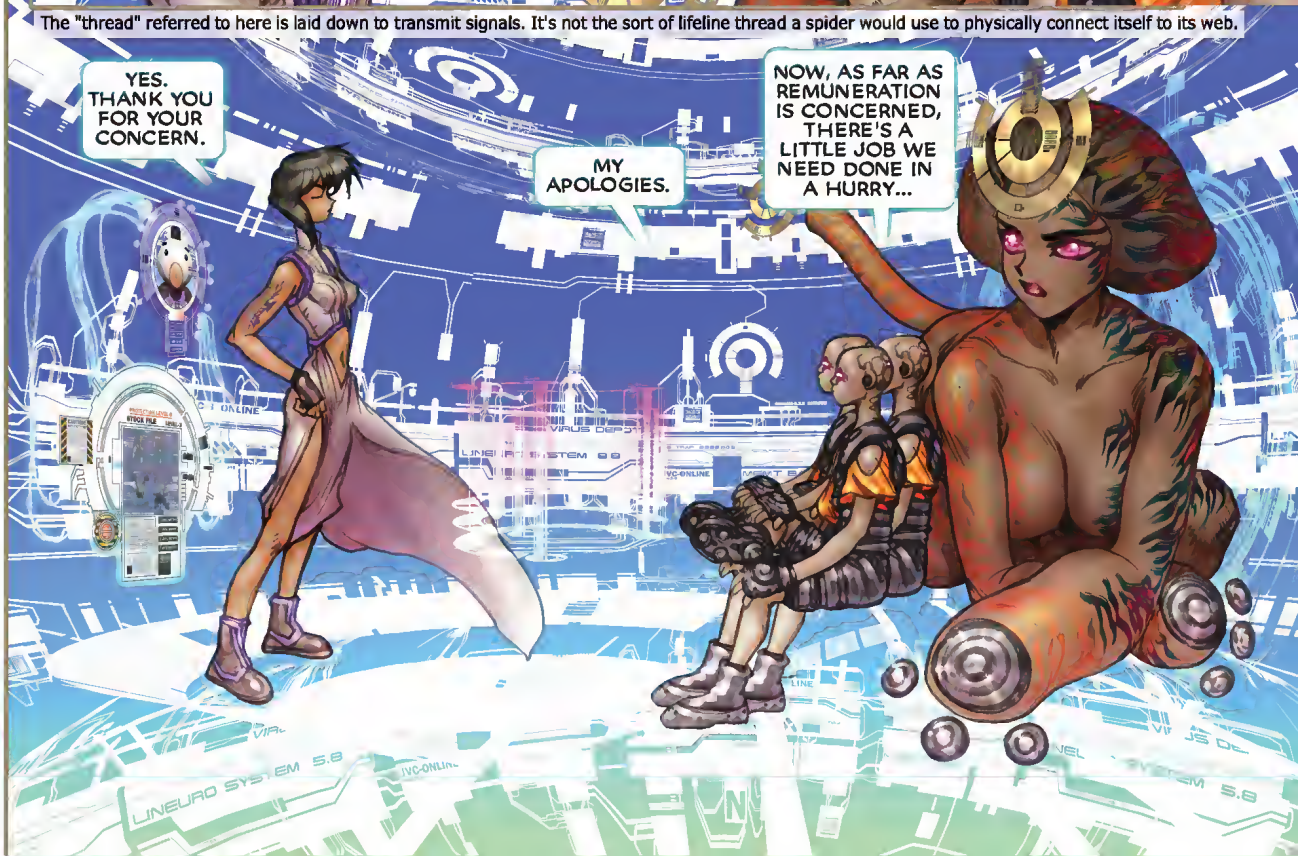
SO. HAVE YOU BEEN USING MY CREATION WELL?
EXCUSE ME. FOOLISH QUESTION.
ANYTHING TO REPORT FROM THE FIELD?
SPLITTING UP THESE MUSCLES AND CREATING A COMPOUND BOWGUN WAS AN EXCELLENT IDEA.
UNDER NORMAL MOVEMENTS THE OUTPUT CURVE IS REVERSED AT THE HIGH END...
I WISH THE MINIGRENADES HADN'T BEEN SHRUNK QUITE SO MUCH, BUT I KNOW THERE WERE SPACE CONSTRAINTS.
YOU COULD CREATE A SINGLE-ACTION PROTOTYPE MICROBOW FOR A WRIST GUARD AND MAKE THE EXPLOSIVE CORE HALF-SIZE...
AH, BUT PLAYING AROUND WITH TOO MANY TOYS LIKE THAT WOULD THROW YOUR BODY OFF-BALANCE.
*SURELY* YOU COULD MAKE 'EM SO THEY DON'T AFFECT MY BALANCE! ♥
PLANNING TO KNOCK DOWN FLYING CONNECTOR PLUGS WITH YOUR *ARMS* IN THE FUTURE...?
DID YOU USE THE NEW PROSTHETIC FLOAT MATERIAL? AT THE MAX DEPTH WE SPECIFIED, THERE SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM WITH CATASTROPHIC COLLAPSE.

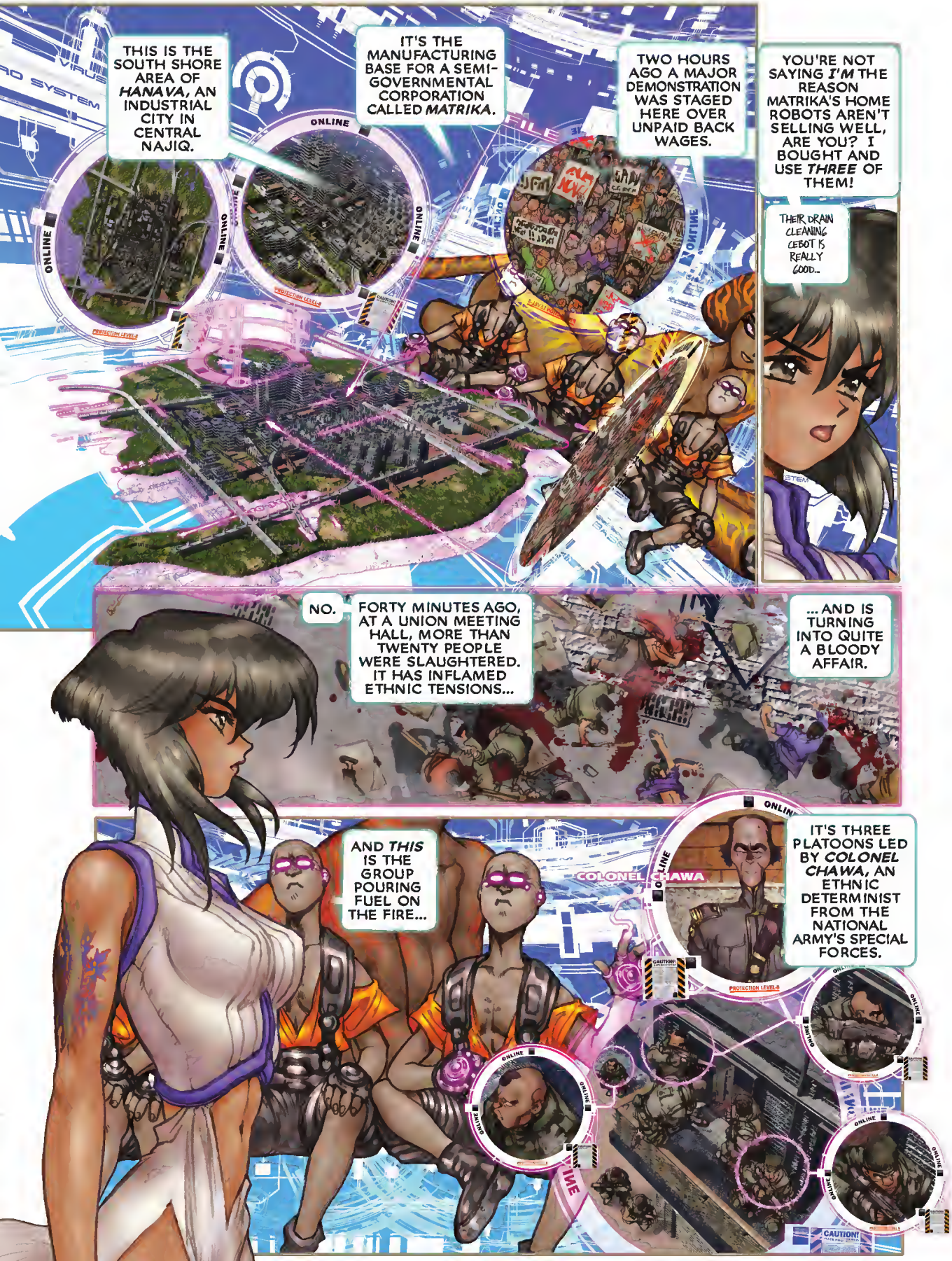
A "CEBOT" is a robot in the centimeter-size class.




The "thread" referred to here is laid down to transmit signals. It's not the sort of lifeline thread a spider would use to physically connect itself to its web.

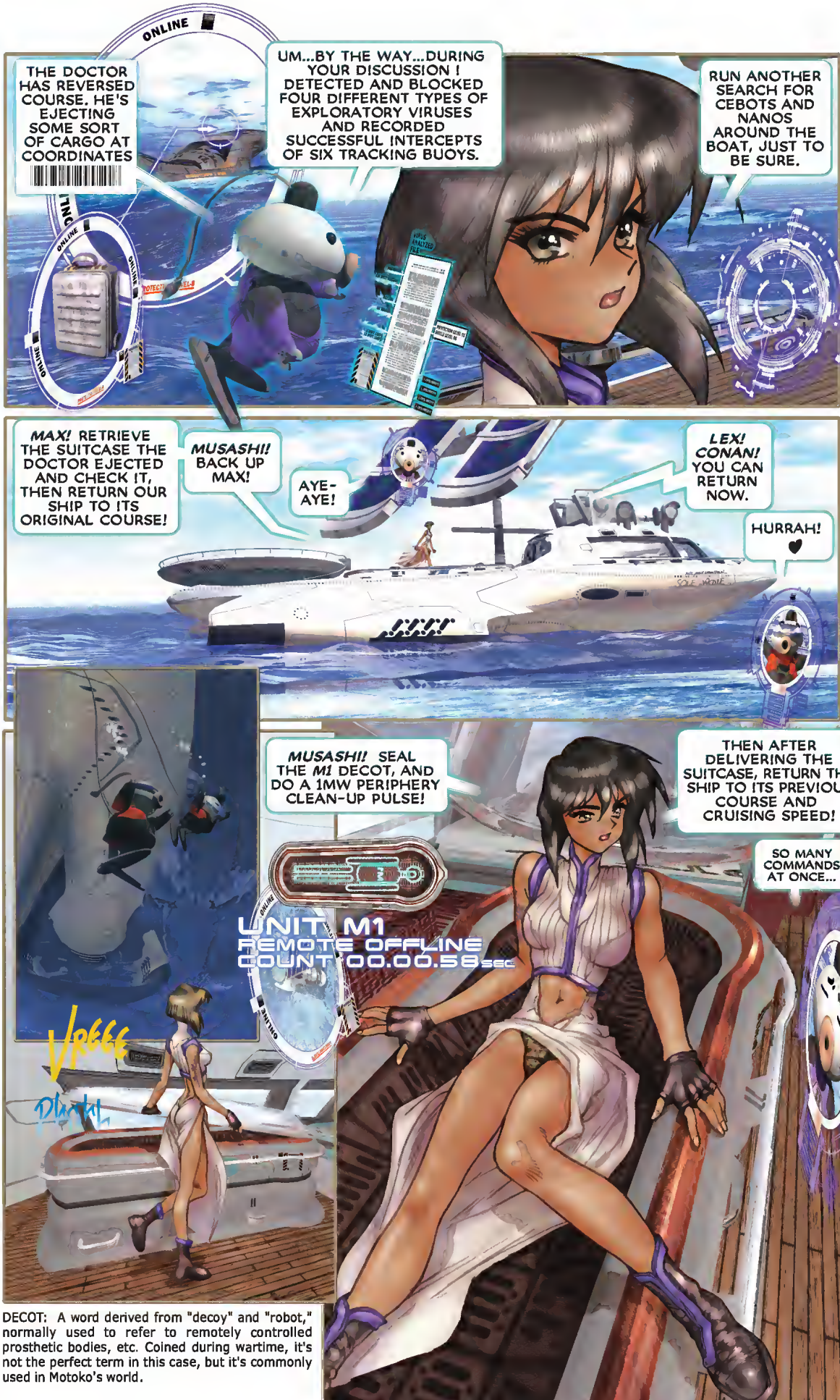




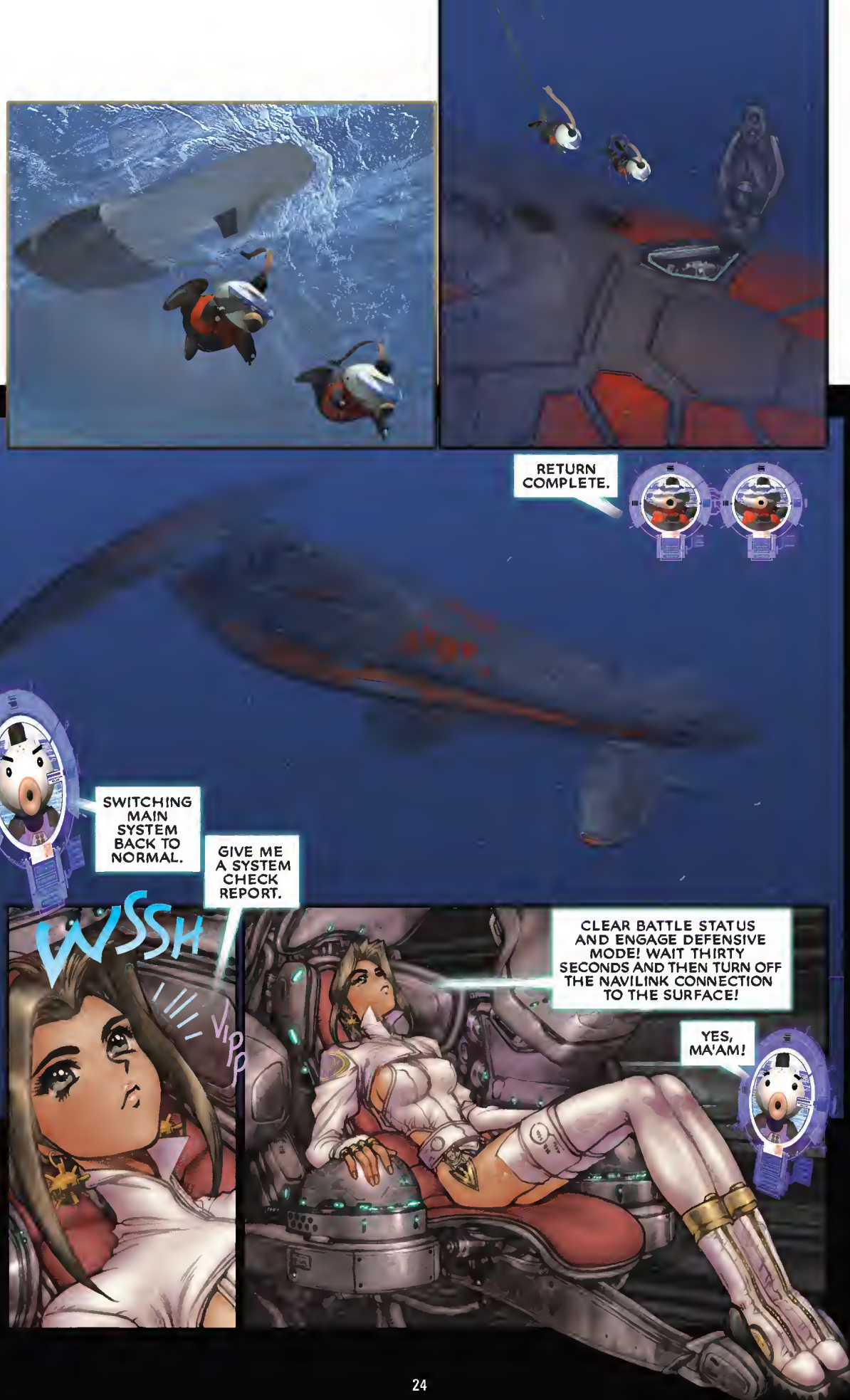

DETERMINIST: A general term applied to those who reject compromise and assimilation and insist that others be of a specific ethnicity, race, religion, or faction. Everyone's entitled to make harsh demands of themselves, of course, but making them of others is an unwelcome disservice.

I WANT YOU TO STOP THESE THUGS BEFORE THE PLACE FALLS INTO CIVIL WAR AND A NEIGHBORING STATE OR A U.N. MULTINATIONAL FORCE HAS TO INTERVENE.
NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THE EFFECT YOU'LL HAVE ON THE RIOT ITSELF.
ONLINE
PROTECTION LEVEL-8
CAUTION!
DEATH 000.012
DEATH 000.025
NAJIO MILITARY FILE
BUT YOU DON'T WANT ME TO *TOTALLY* BLOW MY COVER AND STRENGTHEN THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES' POSITION, RIGHT?
ACTUALLY, THAT'S NOT SO IMPORTANT.
WELL, I WON'T ASK ANY MORE QUESTIONS, THEN.
I'VE CONFIRMED THE RIOT BY SATELLITE, BOSS.
DEATH 000.004
DEATH 000.018
DEATH 000.027
*CHUI! SHIVA!* GET ME INFO FROM THE U.N. AND THE U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT. DELTA-VEE THE RELAY SATELLITE'S ORBIT FOR BACK-UP PLAN BETA, AND BE BATTLE-READY!
*HANNIBAL!* ACTIVATE DECOT "CLARA II" ON SYSLINK C.01! STANDBY WITH MOTO-CHAN'S BASAKA-PAK CHEMBOOST "ULTRA VIOLENCE"...!
YES, MA'AM!
MORE DATA-- THE SOLDIERS DON'T BOTHER TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITIES BECAUSE THEY'RE AT THE TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN, NOT BECAUSE THEY'RE POORLY TRAINED. THEY'RE AN ELITE GROUP, AND THEY INCLUDE TWELVE SOLDIERS WITH ADVANCED PROSTHETICS.
NO USE WARNING HER ABOUT THAT.

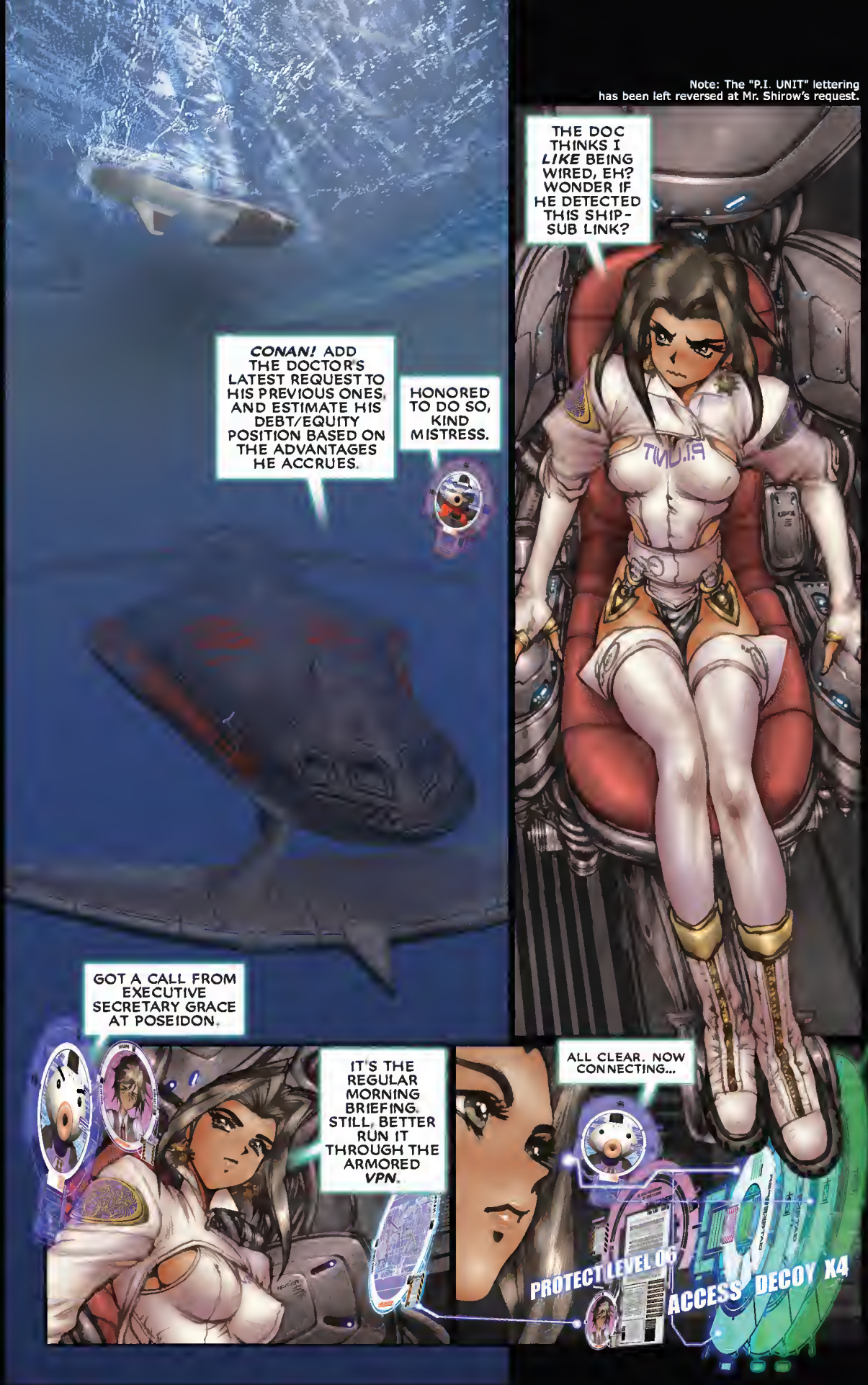
I'LL NEED AT LEAST FIVE HOURS BEFORE I START THE OP.
BY THE WAY, DOCTOR...THIS SORT OF DIRTY WORK IS OKAY SOMETIMES, BUT ONCE IN A WHILE IT'D BE NICE TO HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT THAT'S A LITTLE MORE ELEGANT AND MEANINGFUL.
OH, REALLY...?
BBC UNIT
DEATH 000.008
DEATH 000.002
DEATH 000.001
ONLINE
WE'LL DROP THE REGULAR SUPPLIES AT COORDINATES
SO YOU CAN PICK THEM UP LATER.
BY THE WAY...WHY DO YOU ALWAYS INSIST ON BEING DIRECT-WIRED?
PROTECTION LEVEL-8
ME?!
AH...FORGET I ASKED. GOOD LUCK ON THE JOB.
??
CAUTION!



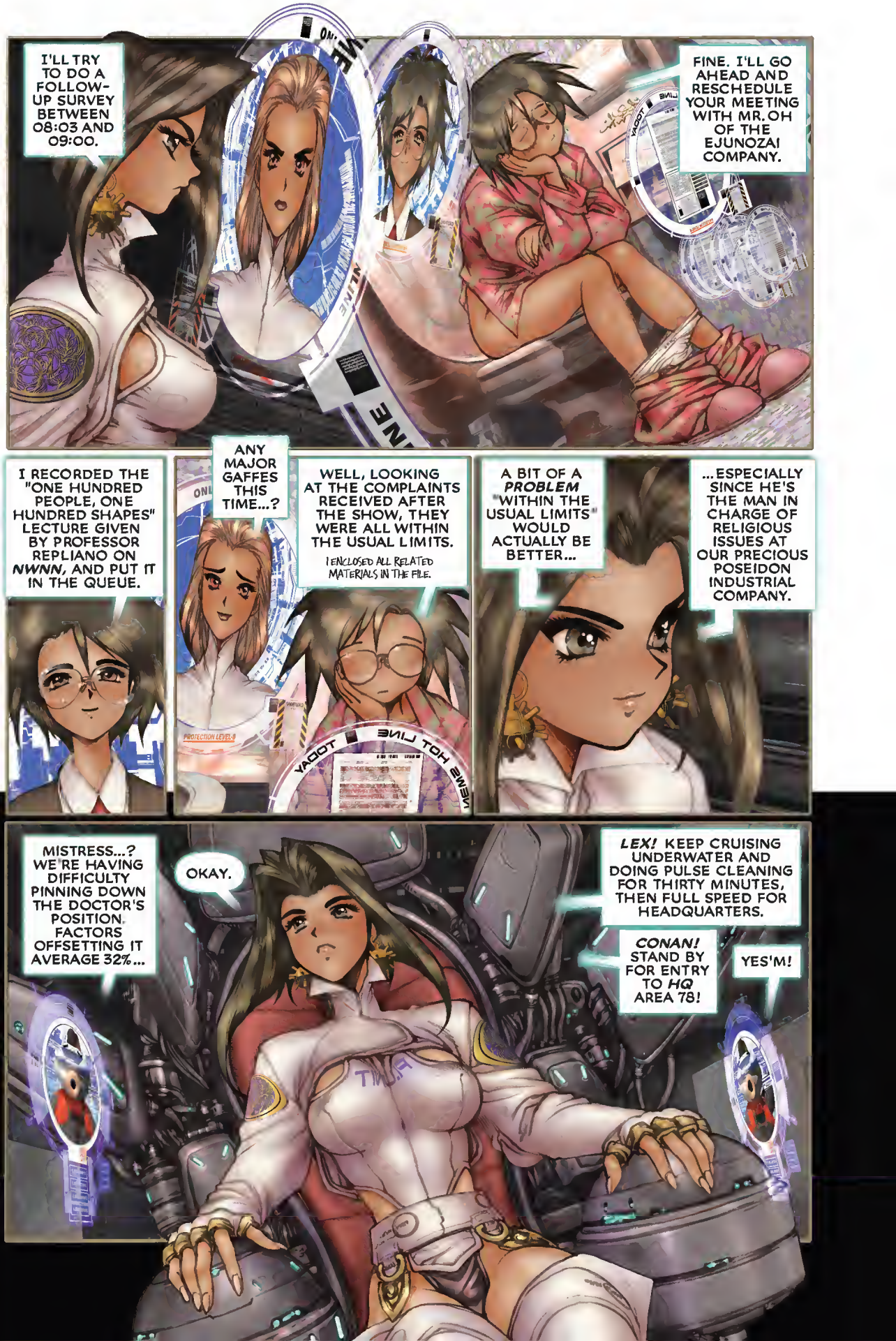

DECOT: A word derived from "decoy" and "robot," normally used to refer to remotely controlled prosthetic bodies, etc. Coined during wartime, it's not the perfect term in this case, but it's commonly used in Motoko's world.

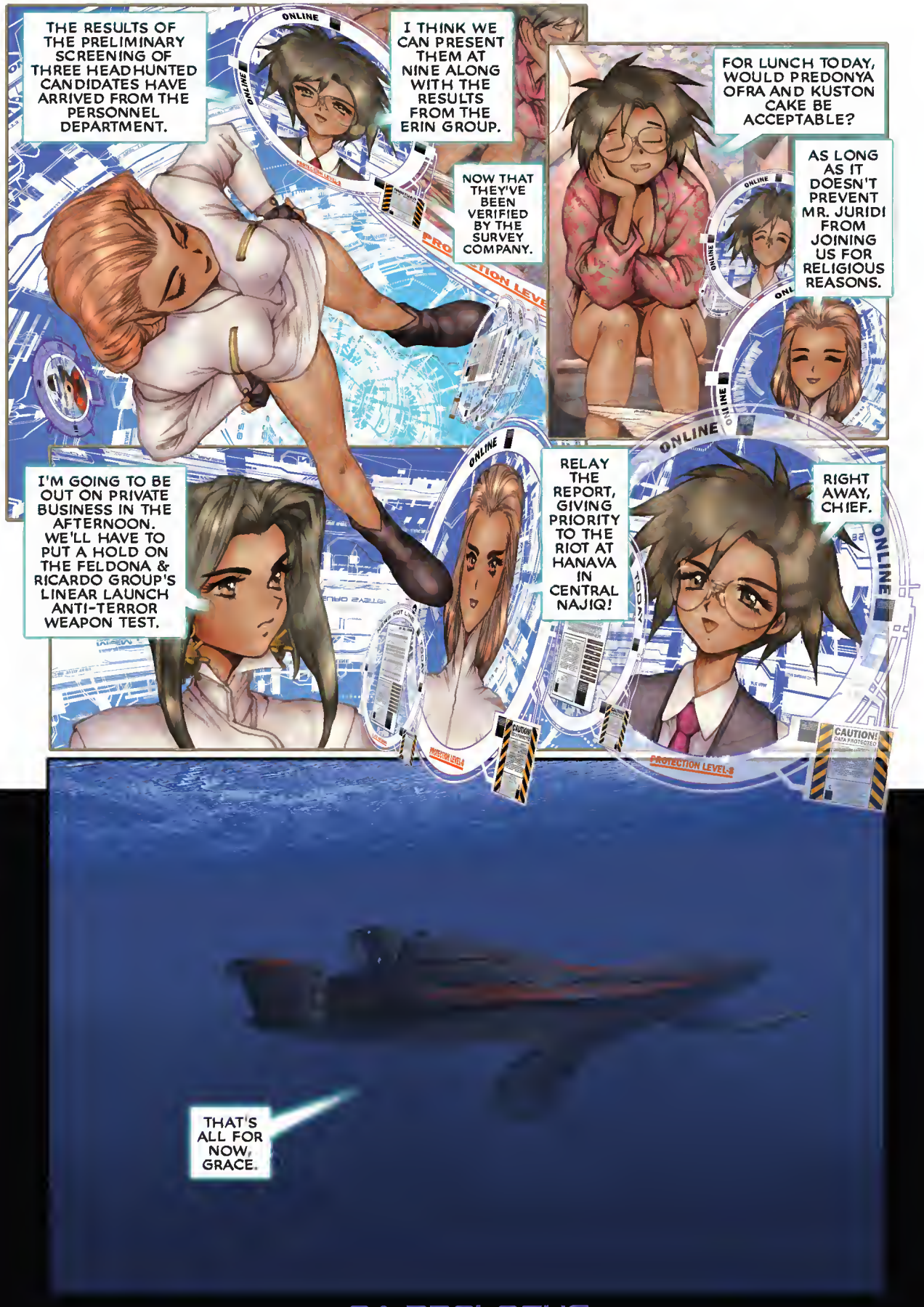

RETURN COMPLETE.
SWITCHING MAIN SYSTEM BACK TO NORMAL.
GIVE ME A SYSTEM CHECK REPORT.
WSSH
CLEAR BATTLE STATUS AND ENGAGE DEFENSIVE MODE! WAIT THIRTY SECONDS AND THEN TURN OFF THE NAVILINK CONNECTION TO THE SURFACE!
YES, MA'AM!

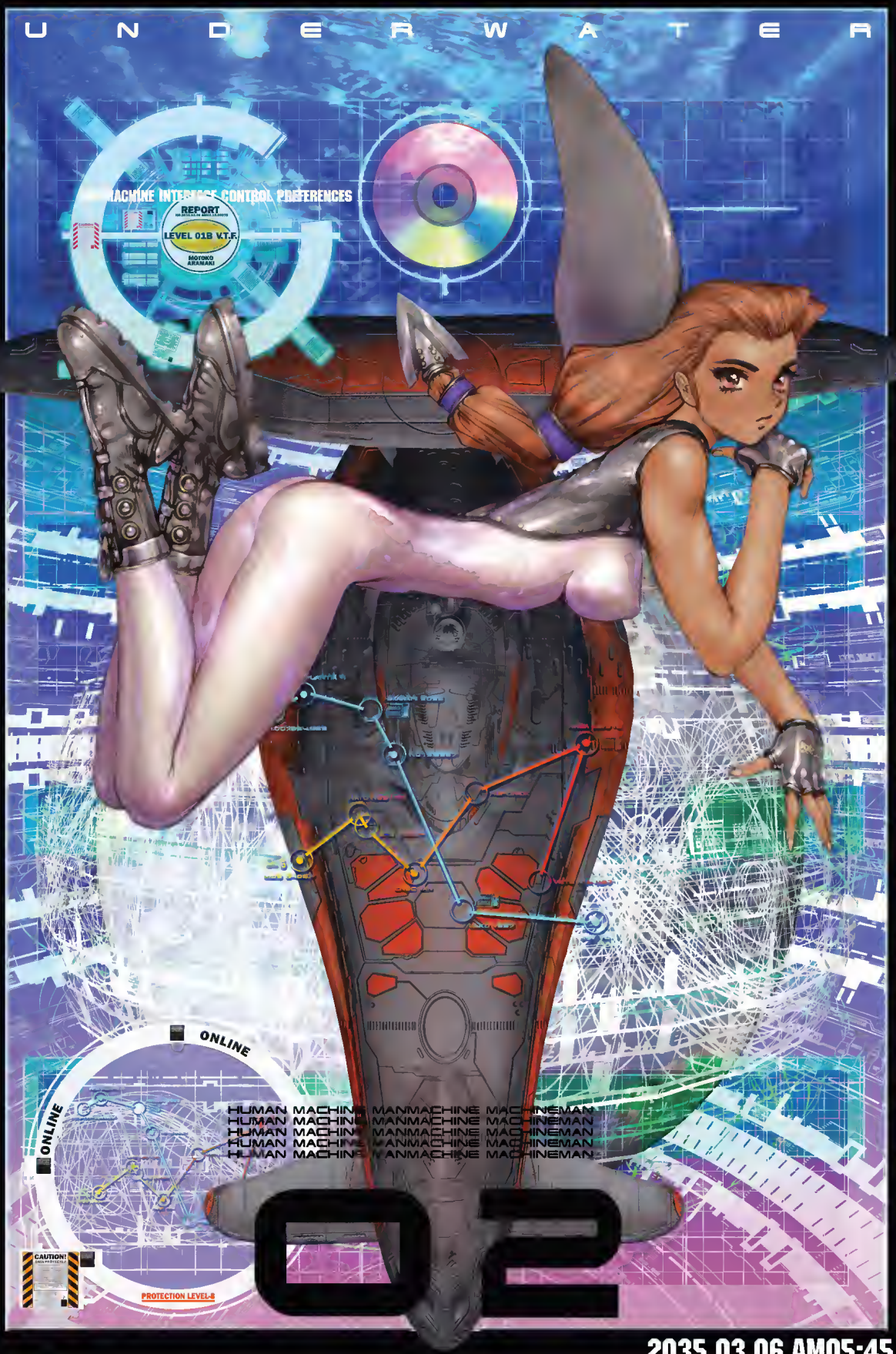
Note: The "P.I. UNIT" lettering has been left reversed at Mr. Shirow's request.

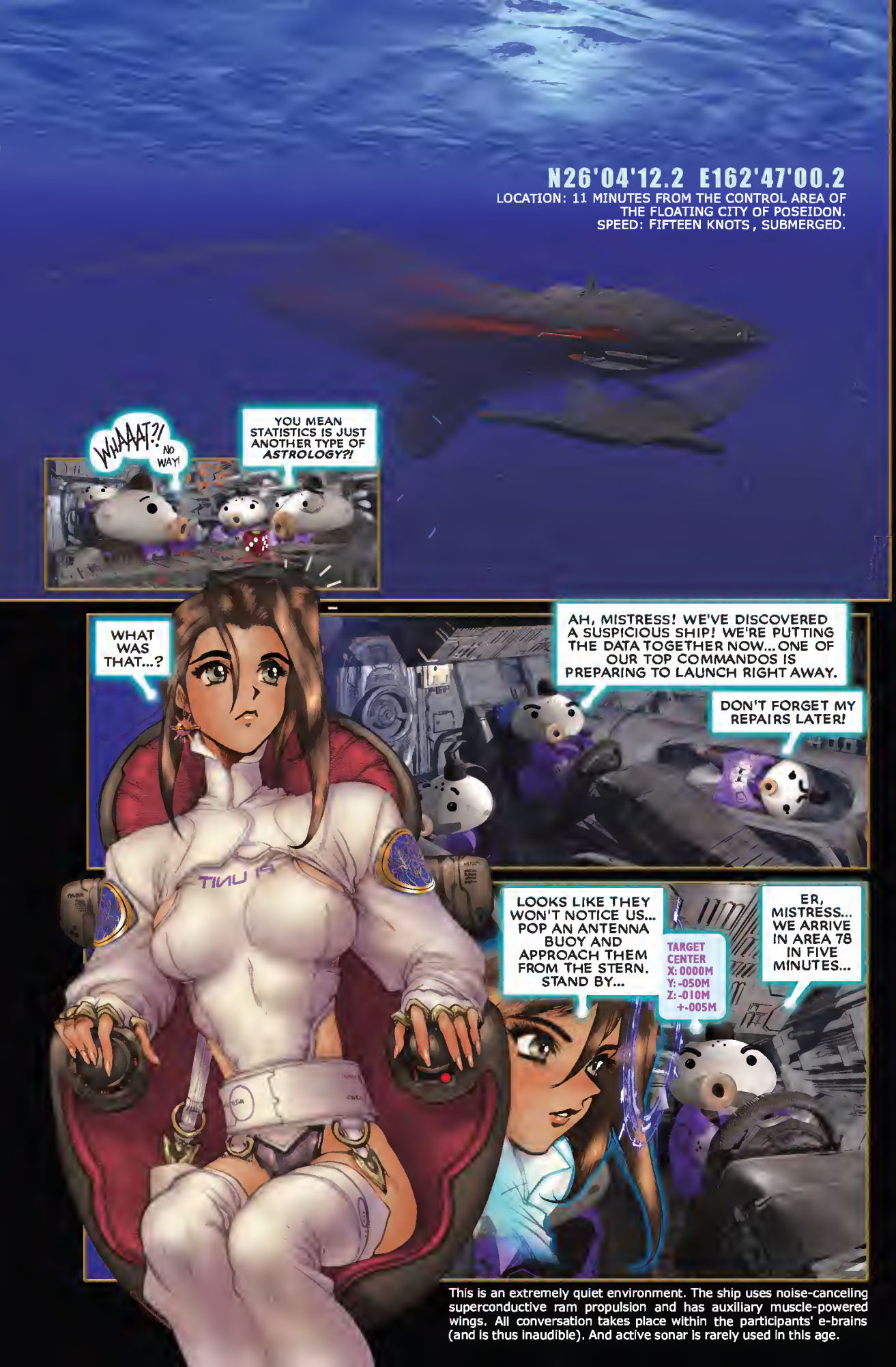


HLF: Human Liberation Front


I'LL TRY TO DO A FOLLOW-UP SURVEY BETWEEN 08:03 AND 09:00.
FINE. I'LL GO AHEAD AND RESCHEDULE YOUR MEETING WITH MR. OH OF THE EJUNOZAI COMPANY.
I RECORDED THE "ONE HUNDRED PEOPLE, ONE HUNDRED SHAPES" LECTURE GIVEN BY PROFESSOR REPLIANO ON NWNN, AND PUT IT IN THE QUEUE.
ANY MAJOR GAFFES THIS TIME...?
WELL, LOOKING AT THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED AFTER THE SHOW, THEY WERE ALL WITHIN THE USUAL LIMITS.
I ENCLOSED ALL RELATED MATERIALS IN THE FILE.
A BIT OF A PROBLEM "WITHIN THE USUAL LIMITS" WOULD ACTUALLY BE BETTER...
...ESPECIALLY SINCE HE'S THE MAN IN CHARGE OF RELIGIOUS ISSUES AT OUR PRECIOUS POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL COMPANY.
MISTRESS...? WE'RE HAVING DIFFICULTY PINNING DOWN THE DOCTOR'S POSITION. FACTORS OFFSETTING IT AVERAGE 32%...
OKAY.
LEX! KEEP CRUISING UNDERWATER AND DOING PULSE CLEANING FOR THIRTY MINUTES, THEN FULL SPEED FOR HEADQUARTERS.
CONAN! STAND BY FOR ENTRY TO HQ AREA 78!
YES'M!


THE RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY SCREENING OF THREE HEADHUNTED CANDIDATES HAVE ARRIVED FROM THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT.
I THINK WE CAN PRESENT THEM AT NINE ALONG WITH THE RESULTS FROM THE ERIN GROUP.
NOW THAT THEY'VE BEEN VERIFIED BY THE SURVEY COMPANY.
FOR LUNCH TODAY, WOULD PREDONYA OFRA AND KUSTON CAKE BE ACCEPTABLE?
AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T PREVENT MR. JURIDI FROM JOINING US FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS.
I'M GOING TO BE OUT ON PRIVATE BUSINESS IN THE AFTERNOON. WE'LL HAVE TO PUT A HOLD ON THE FELDONA & RICARDO GROUP'S LINEAR LAUNCH ANTI-TERROR WEAPON TEST.
RELAY THE REPORT, GIVING PRIORITY TO THE RIOT AT HANAVA IN CENTRAL NAJIQ!
RIGHT AWAY, CHIEF.
THAT'S ALL FOR NOW, GRACE.
ONLINE
PROTECTION LEVEL-3
CAUTION! DATA PROTECTED

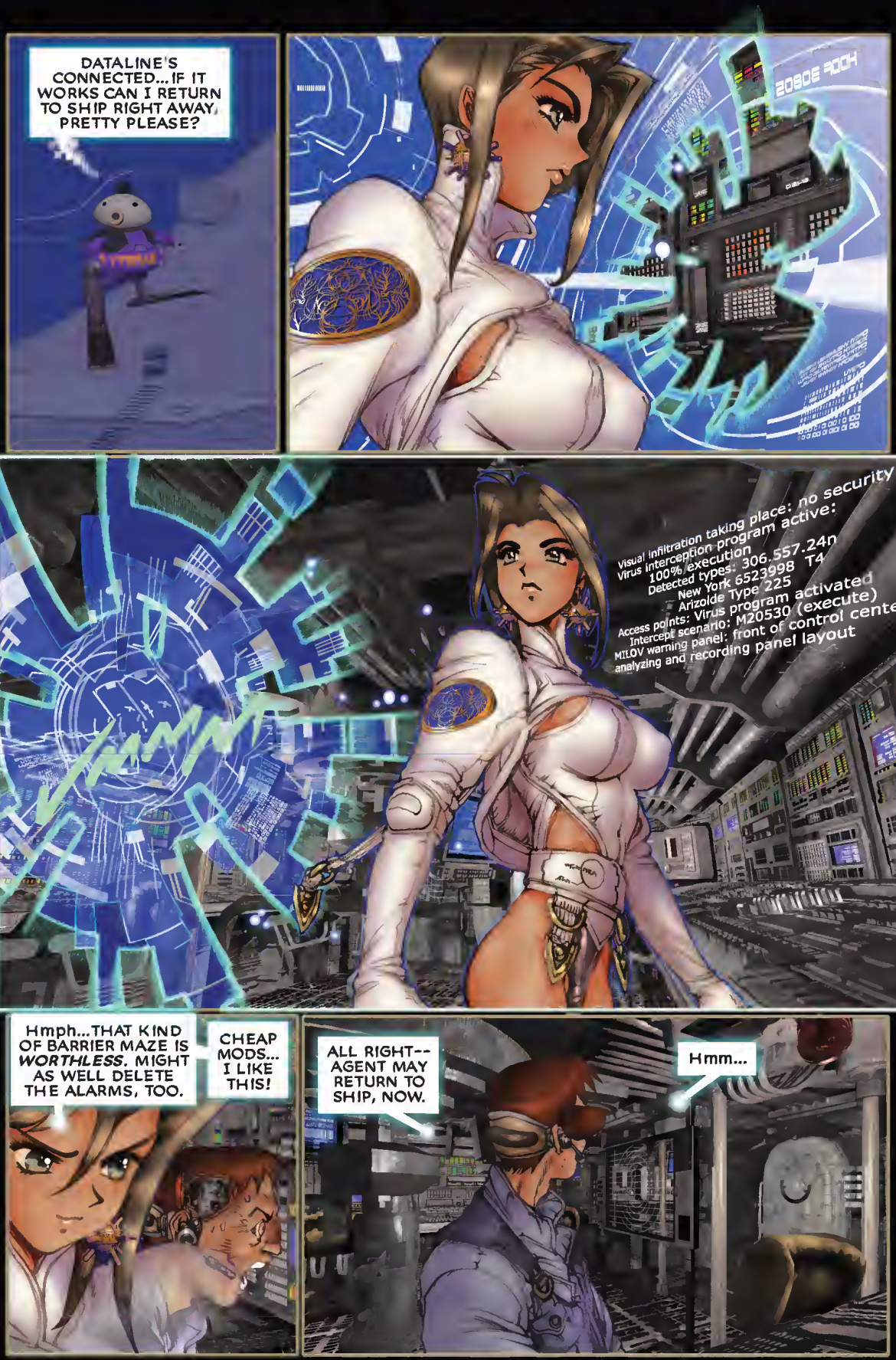

U N D E R W A T E R
REPORT
LEVEL 01B V.T.F.
MOTOKO AKANAKU
ONLINE
ONLINE
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
CAUTION!
PROTECTION LEVEL-B
02
2035.03.06.AM05:45




This is an extremely quiet environment. The ship uses noise-canceling superconductive ram propulsion and has auxiliary muscle-powered wings. All conversation takes place within the participants' e-brains (and is thus inaudible). And active sonar is rarely used in this age.

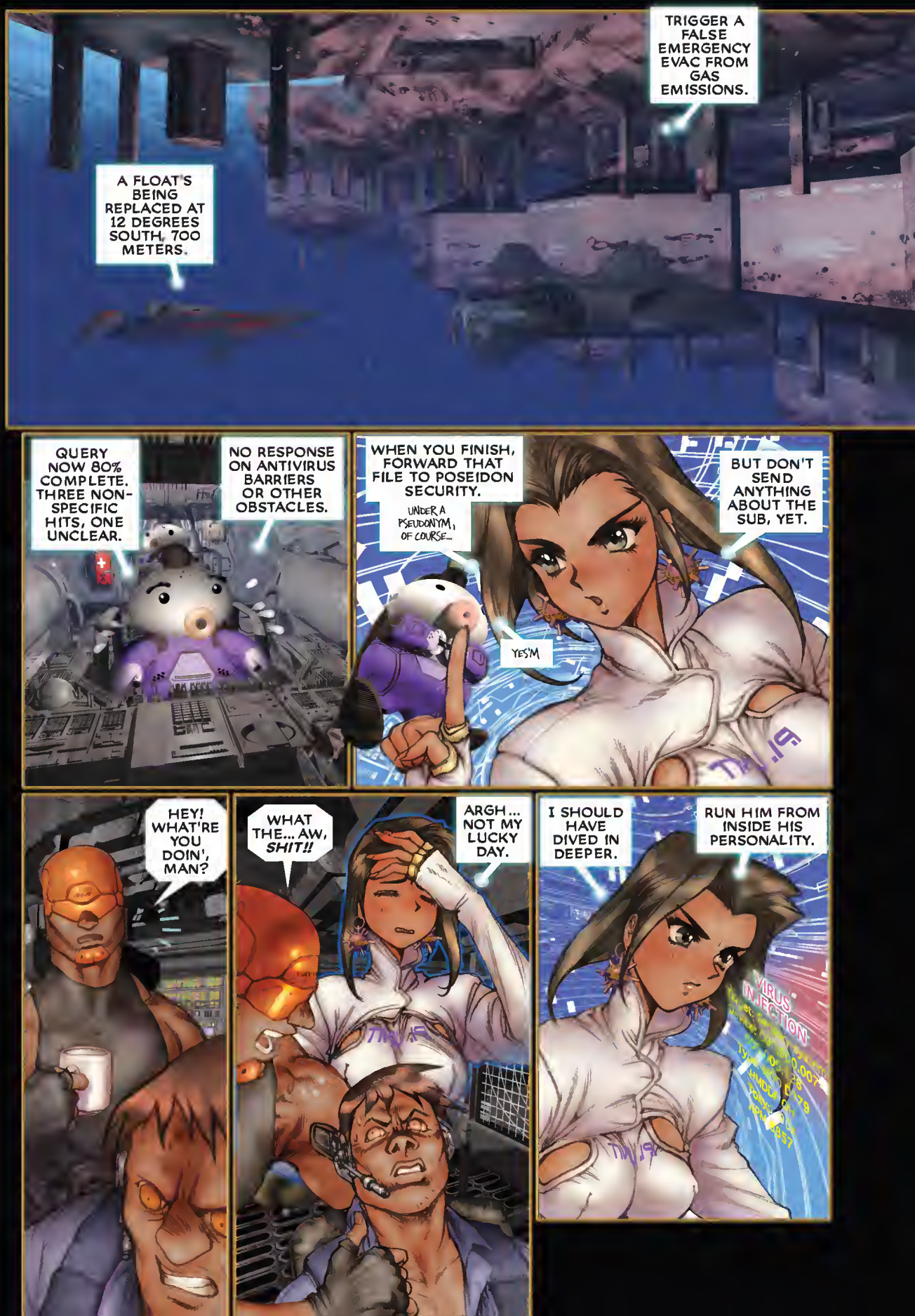
Newer torpedoes are designed to swim out of their launch tubes, so the noise previously generated during firing by the compressed-air "blow" is no longer a problem. In this case they're also using water currents generated by the propulsion system to augment initial speed. (In other words, the launch tubes also have vectored-thrust nozzles on them.) I should also mention the reason that neither ship has bubble maskers is because I decided it wouldn't look good visually.

VLF: Very Low Frequency




I know the way I drew the commando sent out from the sub seems absurd. Theoretically, I should have depicted him like other characters with a head and limbs and muscles, controlling a jet-propelled, streamlined undersea ROV (remotely operated vehicle), but that would have been boring. I know, even robots would find it rather hard to swim fast enough underwater to leave one moving sub and catch up to another...especially when wearing a life preserver! Maybe I should claim he's really inside a transparent squid-shaped ROV...or would that be pushing my luck?

The slack in the wire is (supposed) to indicate the ship is slowing. The wire linking the pirate sub with Motoko's is for hacking purposes. There's a buoy on the end of the one trailing out the back of her sub, allowing UHF global connections via satellite.


A FLOAT'S BEING REPLACED AT 12 DEGREES SOUTH, 700 METERS.
TRIGGER A FALSE EMERGENCY EVAC FROM GAS EMISSIONS.
QUERY NOW 80% COMPLETE. THREE NON-SPECIFIC HITS, ONE UNCLEAR.
NO RESPONSE ON ANTIVIRUS BARRIERS OR OTHER OBSTACLES.
WHEN YOU FINISH, FORWARD THAT FILE TO POSEIDON SECURITY.
UNDER A PSEUDONYM, OF COURSE...
YES'M.
BUT DON'T SEND ANYTHING ABOUT THE SUB, YET.
HEY! WHAT'RE YOU DOIN', MAN?
WHAT THE... AW, SHIT!!
ARGH... NOT MY LUCKY DAY.
I SHOULD HAVE DIVED IN DEEPER.
RUN HIM FROM INSIDE HIS PERSONALITY.
VIRUS INFECTION

!
AUGH!
KRAK
DUNNO WHO THE HELL YOU ARE, BUT YA SHOULDN'TA BROKE MY BUDDY'S ARM.
FRIGGIN' WASTE A' TIME, TOO.
CHUDD
WHOOPS!
FMPH
VIRUS INJECTION LOG FILE:
Injection completed.
No major problems recorded.
CUT THE CONNECTION! ALL BACK FULL! GET US OUT OF HERE AT MAX ZERO-CAV SPEED!
FIRE TWO ACTIVE DECOYS AND PREPARE FOR A SHOCK!

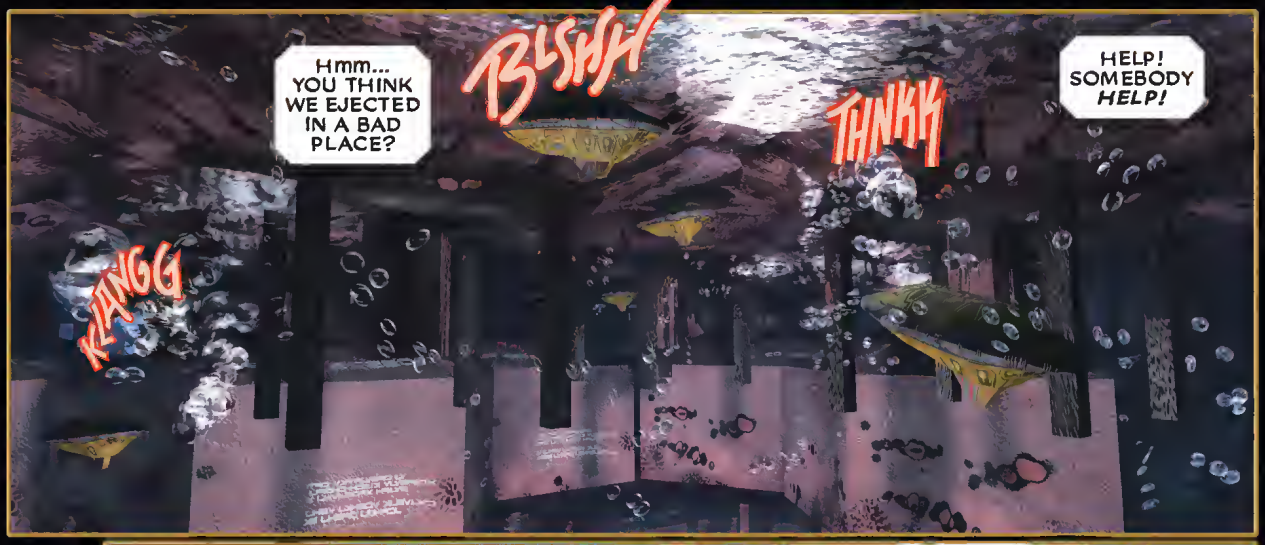
Normally Motoko wouldn't have to cover her ears to protect them from the active sonar ping, because she can block the sound through software. (On the other hand, it's always good to protect your ear-drums.) She probably didn't want to lose her passive sonar link with the pirate sub, since re-linking might allow a hacker to infiltrate using sound.

OKAY, STOP OPENING OUR RANGE. CHANGE COURSE TO USE THE FLOATS AS A SHIELD.
AYE-AYE, SAH!
PLACE TWO ACTIVE DECOYS JUST IN FRONT OF OUR TORPEDO LAUNCH TUBE OPENINGS! RELEASE SAFETY LOCKS ON THEM AND ON THE MINES!
SAFETY LOCKS ON OPERATIONAL EXPLOSIVES ARE RELEASED! STANDING BY TO DETONATE.
WAAH! I'M SCARED!
Commands for decoys and mines are issued using audio frequencies.
NOW... STAND BY!
?!? WHAT THE HELL?! THE SENSORS HAVE ALL GONE SCREWY!
AW, SHIT! ALL SYSTEMS ARE GOING DOWN! BREAKERS POPPING!
KLIK
KLIK
KLIK
HA HA HA HA HA
BITE ME, BOYS!
BITE ME, BOYS!
HA HA HA
SWITCH TO MANUAL!!
FORGET THE ELECTRONICS!!

BACKUP POWER COMING ON LINE... WHAT TH--? HEY!!
CUT THE DAMN LINK CABLE! NOW!!
NOT THAT ONE!!
OBSERVATION TEAM! SCAN THE WORDS COMING FROM INSIDE THE TARGET SHIP AND EVALUATE THEIR RESPONSE.
UM, IT'S A TYPE D, CURRENTLY RANGING IN STRESS RANK BETWEEN 12 AND 13.
LOTS OF CONSTRUCTION NOISE... THEY'RE LOUDER THAN WE ARE!
HA HA HA
DAMN IT! WE'RE SCREWED!
FSSH
HEY?! WHO THE HELL JUST EVACUATED?!
RAISE THE COMM ANTENNA. MAKE AN EMERGENCY REPORT TO SECURITY.
HMPH!
B-BUT...WHAT IF LOCAL PATROLS AND CONTROLS ARE INTENSIFIED...?
DON'T WORRY. IT'LL WORK OUT.
FSSH FSSH FSSH
WILL YOU ASSHOLES QUIT ABANDONING SHIP?
HA HA HA

Torpedoes are normally loaded automatically. Let's assume these hatches are normally used to remove torpedoes, not to load new ones. The sailorette with her hands on the hatch is doing a safety check. (Of course, these sailorettes are really stolen goods, probably designed to be on-board waitresses...or something.) It's a submarine, so no alarms are ringing even though the emergency lights are on.

For the record, this takes into account the possibility that the GPS mines might be duds.
FHWOOSH
SON OF A BITCH RAT BASTARDS! I AIN'T GOIN' DOWN WITH MY SHIP!
WE'VE DETECTED THE SOUND OF THE TARGET SHIP'S TORPEDO LAUNCH TUBES BEING FLOODED!
YOU GET OKAY NUMBERS FOR REFLECTED SHOCK? PUT TWO DECOYS ON STANDBY, JUST TO BE SURE.
AT THIS DISTANCE WE OUGHT TO BE ALL RIGHT...
FIRE!
WHROOM

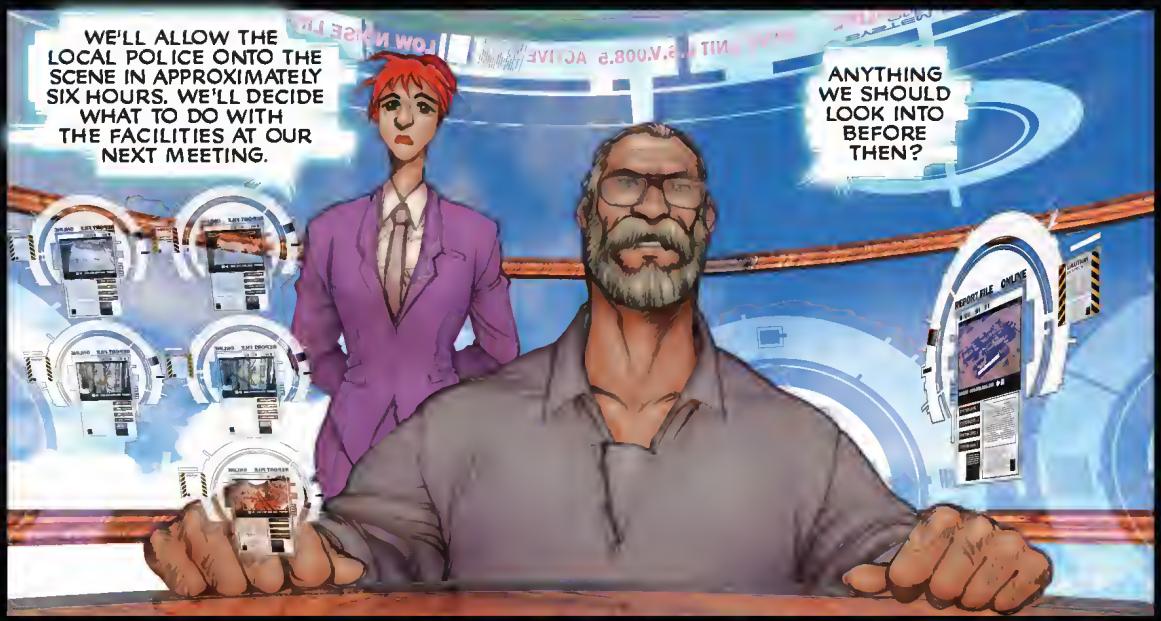


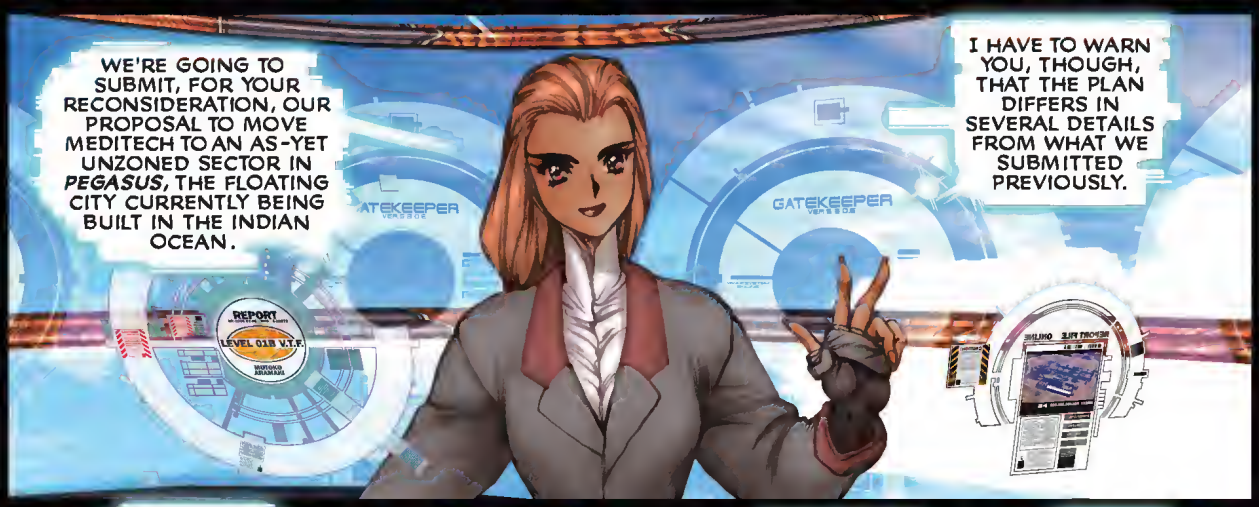
## P.M.12:46 MOTOKO'S OFFICE

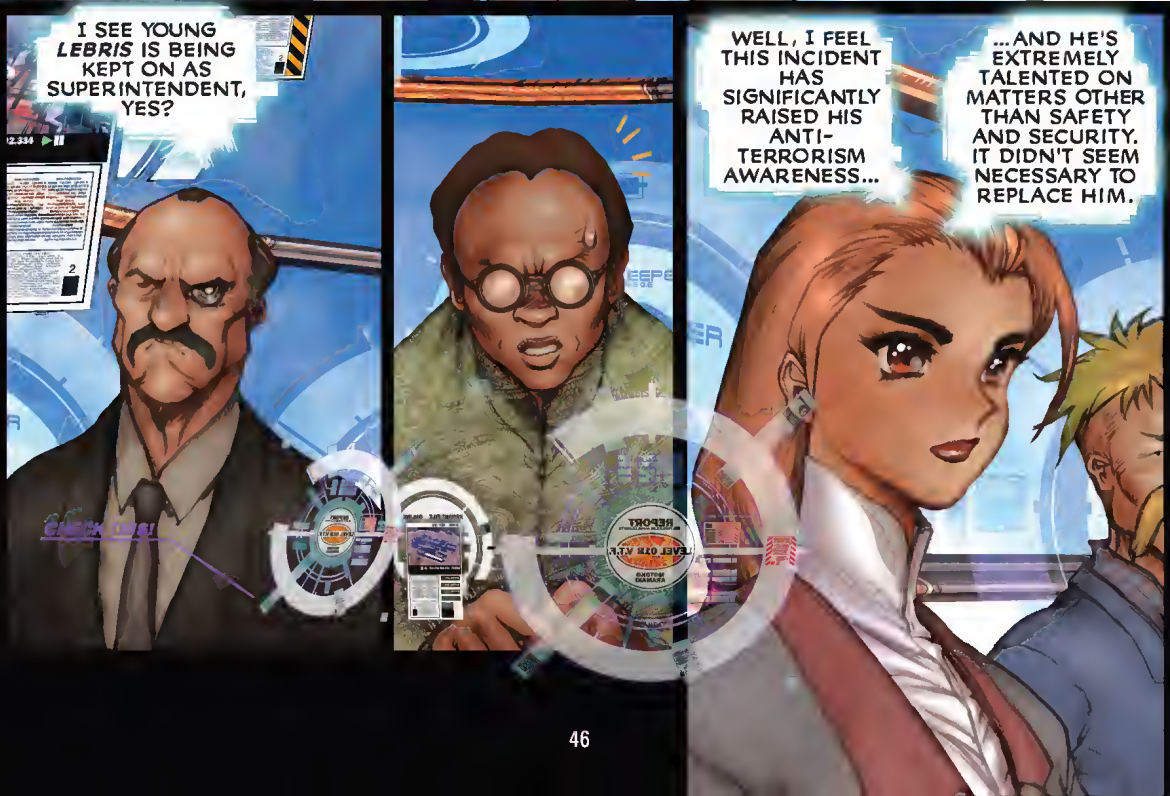
CIRCUIT WEAPON
03
SYSTEM 31
2035.03.06.AM08:12

Meditech customers deposit specific genes with the company and purchase rights to a pig. The genes are spliced into pig ova, which are then fertilized and the pigs raised. If, for some reason, the customer later needs to have a transplant, he or she can use organs from the pigs without risk of rejection by the human immune system. While some religious and animal rights groups have criticized this system, it is increasingly popular with society at large and represents a huge profit growth area for Poseidon.

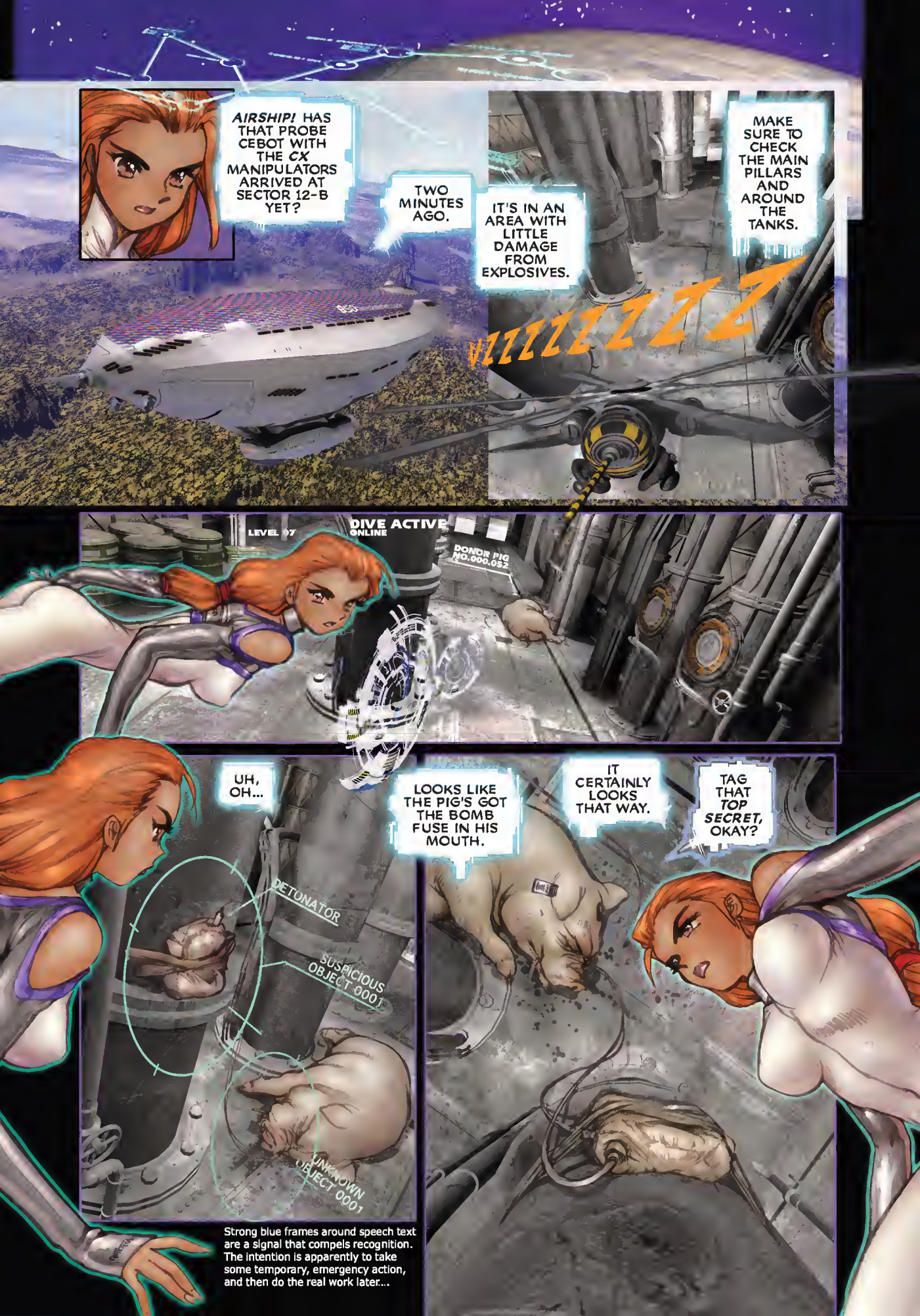
The technology exists to manufacture human organs without using donor pigs, but for safety reasons Poseidon Industrial has chosen to use genetic material taken from its customers while they're young and healthy, rather than growing organs from cells taken from them when they're older and sick. There's always the "programmed cellular death" problem (apoptosis), but we won't get into that here.


WE'LL ALLOW THE LOCAL POLICE ONTO THE SCENE IN APPROXIMATELY SIX HOURS. WE'LL DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH THE FACILITIES AT OUR NEXT MEETING.
ANYTHING WE SHOULD LOOK INTO BEFORE THEN?

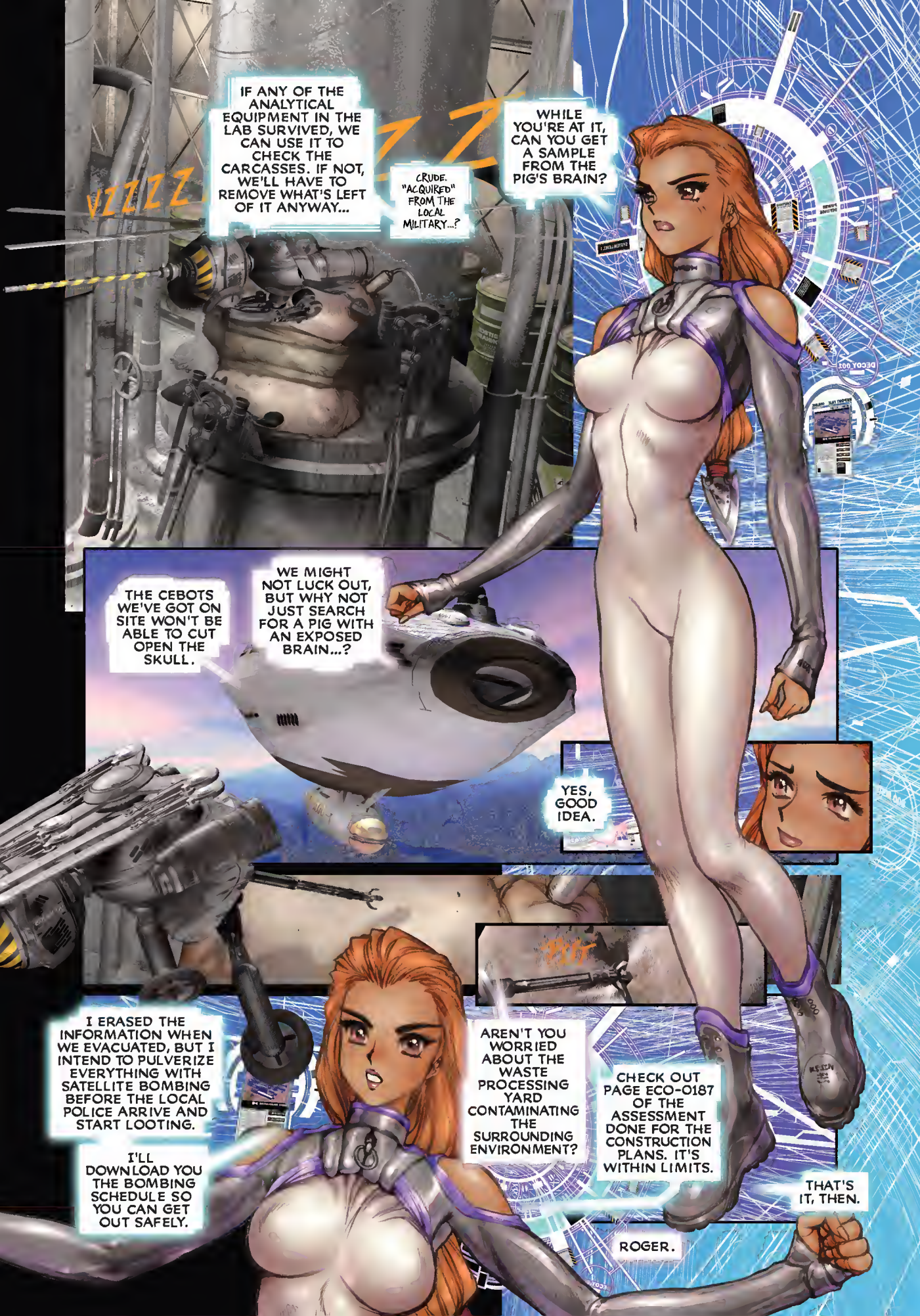

WE'RE GOING TO SUBMIT, FOR YOUR RECONSIDERATION, OUR PROPOSAL TO MOVE MEDITECH TO AN AS-YET UNZONED SECTOR IN *PEGASUS*, THE FLOATING CITY CURRENTLY BEING BUILT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.
I HAVE TO WARN YOU, THOUGH, THAT THE PLAN DIFFERS IN SEVERAL DETAILS FROM WHAT WE SUBMITTED PREVIOUSLY.

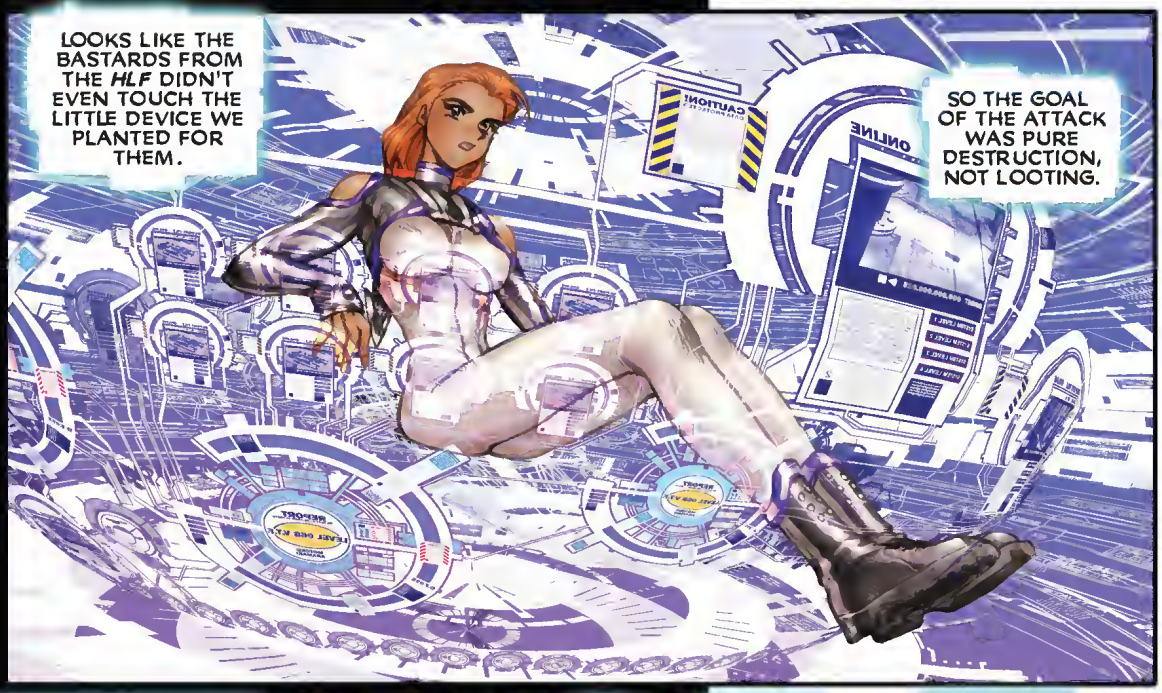

I SEE YOUNG *LEBRIS* IS BEING KEPT ON AS SUPERINTENDENT, YES?
WELL, I FEEL THIS INCIDENT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY RAISED HIS ANTI-TERRORISM AWARENESS...
...AND HE'S EXTREMELY TALENTED ON MATTERS OTHER THAN SAFETY AND SECURITY. IT DIDN'T SEEM NECESSARY TO REPLACE HIM.

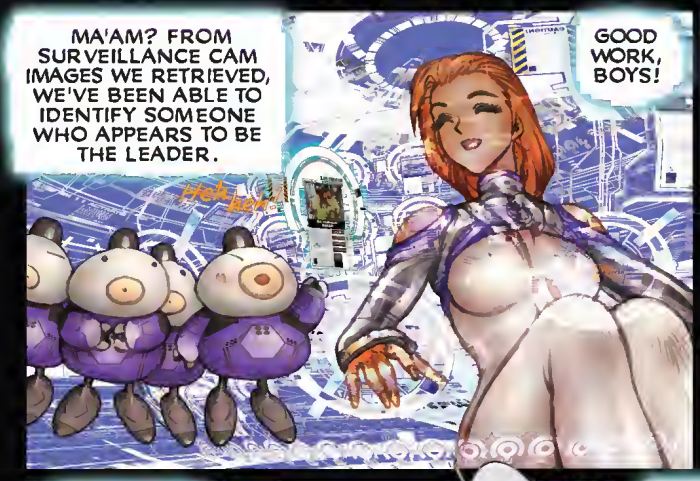
YOU'RE TOO NAÏVE, ARAMAKI! WHO'S GOING TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, EH?
THERE'S NO SENSE ARGUING ABOUT THAT IF WE CAN'T RECOVER FROM THE CURRENT SITUATION OR MAKE GOOD OUR LOSSES. MATTERS WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF THERE WAS MALICE INVOLVED.
AND THE PIGS ARE CHEAP.
"DIFFERENT"...?
YOU'D LIKE IT.
WELL, IF THERE ARE NO OTHER ITEMS...THE NEXT MEETING IS IN THIRTY MINUTES.
DISMISSED!
ARAMAKI, THE TEAM HANDLING THE REPUBLIC OF EASTERN MONNABIA'S WAITING FOR YOU.
I'LL BE FIVE MINUTES LATE....
AM I SUPPOSED TO BE GRATEFUL...?
I THINK YOU AND VINCHAWAN, THE PEGASUS SUPERINTENDENT, OUGHT TO GET ALONG PRETTY WELL.
IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, CONTACT MY SECRETARY. NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

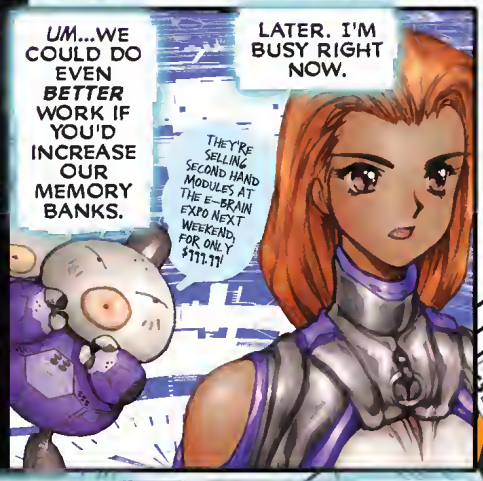


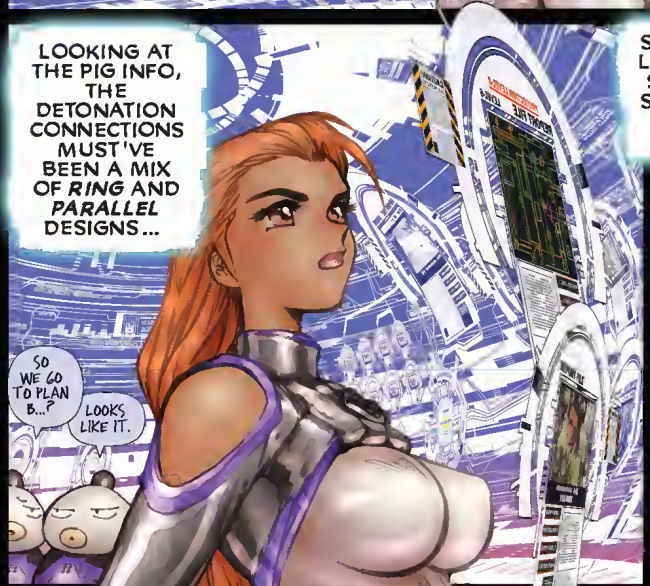

Strong blue frames around speech text are a signal that compels recognition. The intention is apparently to take some temporary, emergency action, and then do the real work later...

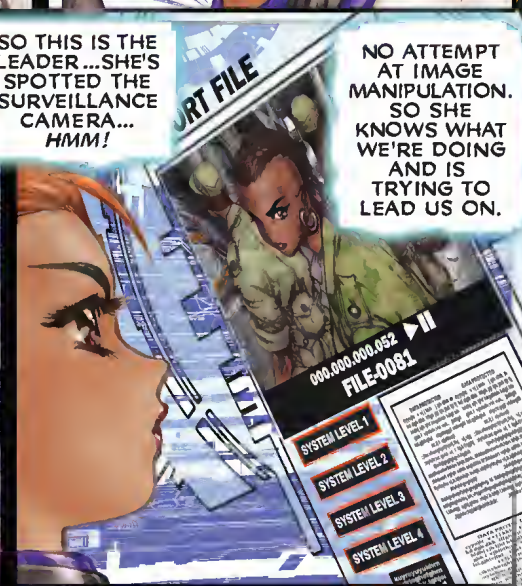

IF ANY OF THE ANALYTICAL EQUIPMENT IN THE LAB SURVIVED, WE CAN USE IT TO CHECK THE CARCASSES. IF NOT, WE'LL HAVE TO REMOVE WHAT'S LEFT OF IT ANYWAY...
ZZZZZ
CRUDE. "ACQUIRED" FROM THE LOCAL MILITARY...?
WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, CAN YOU GET A SAMPLE FROM THE PIG'S BRAIN?
THE CEBOTS WE'VE GOT ON SITE WON'T BE ABLE TO CUT OPEN THE SKULL.
WE MIGHT NOT LUCK OUT, BUT WHY NOT JUST SEARCH FOR A PIG WITH AN EXPOSED BRAIN...?
YES, GOOD IDEA.
I ERASED THE INFORMATION WHEN WE EVACUATED, BUT I INTEND TO PULVERIZE EVERYTHING WITH SATELLITE BOMBING BEFORE THE LOCAL POLICE ARRIVE AND START LOOTING.
I'LL DOWNLOAD YOU THE BOMBING SCHEDULE SO YOU CAN GET OUT SAFELY.
AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT THE WASTE PROCESSING YARD CONTAMINATING THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT?
CHECK OUT PAGE ECO-0187 OF THE ASSESSMENT DONE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION PLANS. IT'S WITHIN LIMITS.
THAT'S IT, THEN.
ROGER.

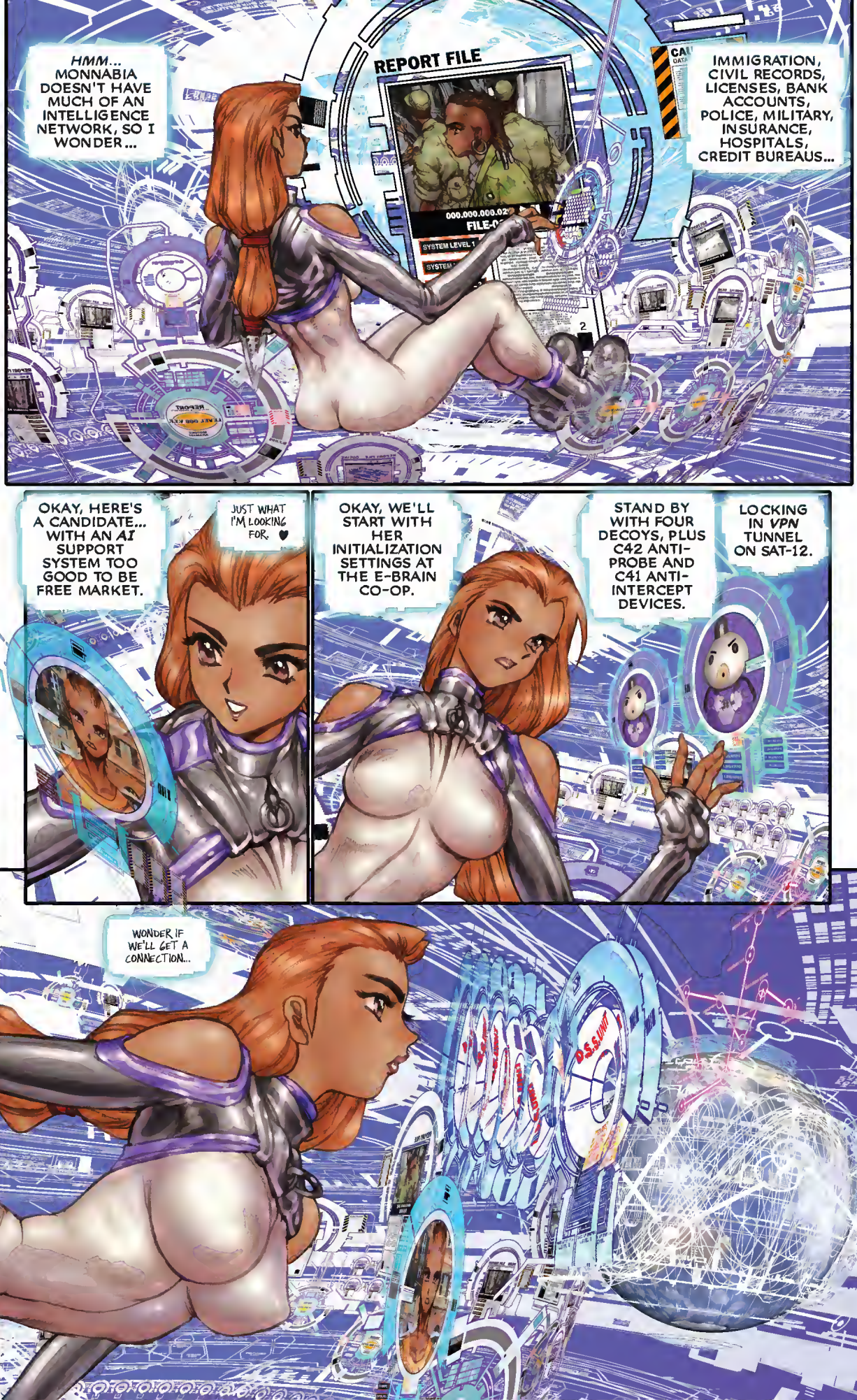

LOOKS LIKE THE BASTARDS FROM THE *HLF* DIDN'T EVEN TOUCH THE LITTLE DEVICE WE PLANTED FOR THEM.
SO THE GOAL OF THE ATTACK WAS PURE DESTRUCTION, NOT LOOTING.

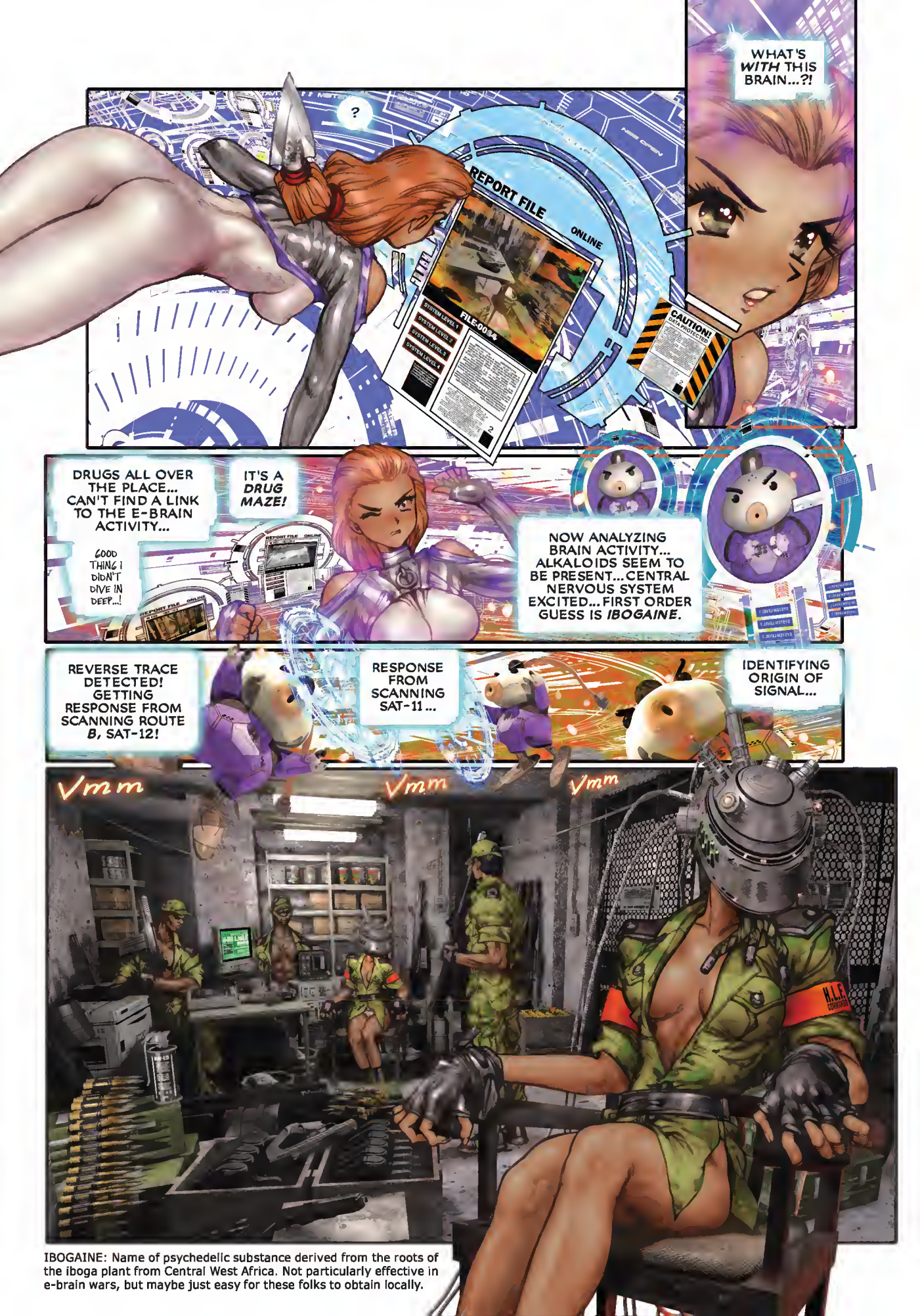

MA'AM? FROM SURVEILLANCE CAM IMAGES WE RETRIEVED, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY SOMEONE WHO APPEARS TO BE THE LEADER.
GOOD WORK, BOYS!
Hek-hek


*UM*...WE COULD DO EVEN *BETTER* WORK IF YOU'D INCREASE OUR MEMORY BANKS.
LATER. I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW.
THEY'RE SELLING SECOND HAND MODULES AT THE E-BRAIN EXPO NEXT WEEKEND FOR ONLY $111.11!


LOOKING AT THE PIG INFO, THE DETONATION CONNECTIONS MUST'VE BEEN A MIX OF *RING* AND *PARALLEL* DESIGNS...
SO WE GO TO PLAN B...?
LOOKS LIKE IT.

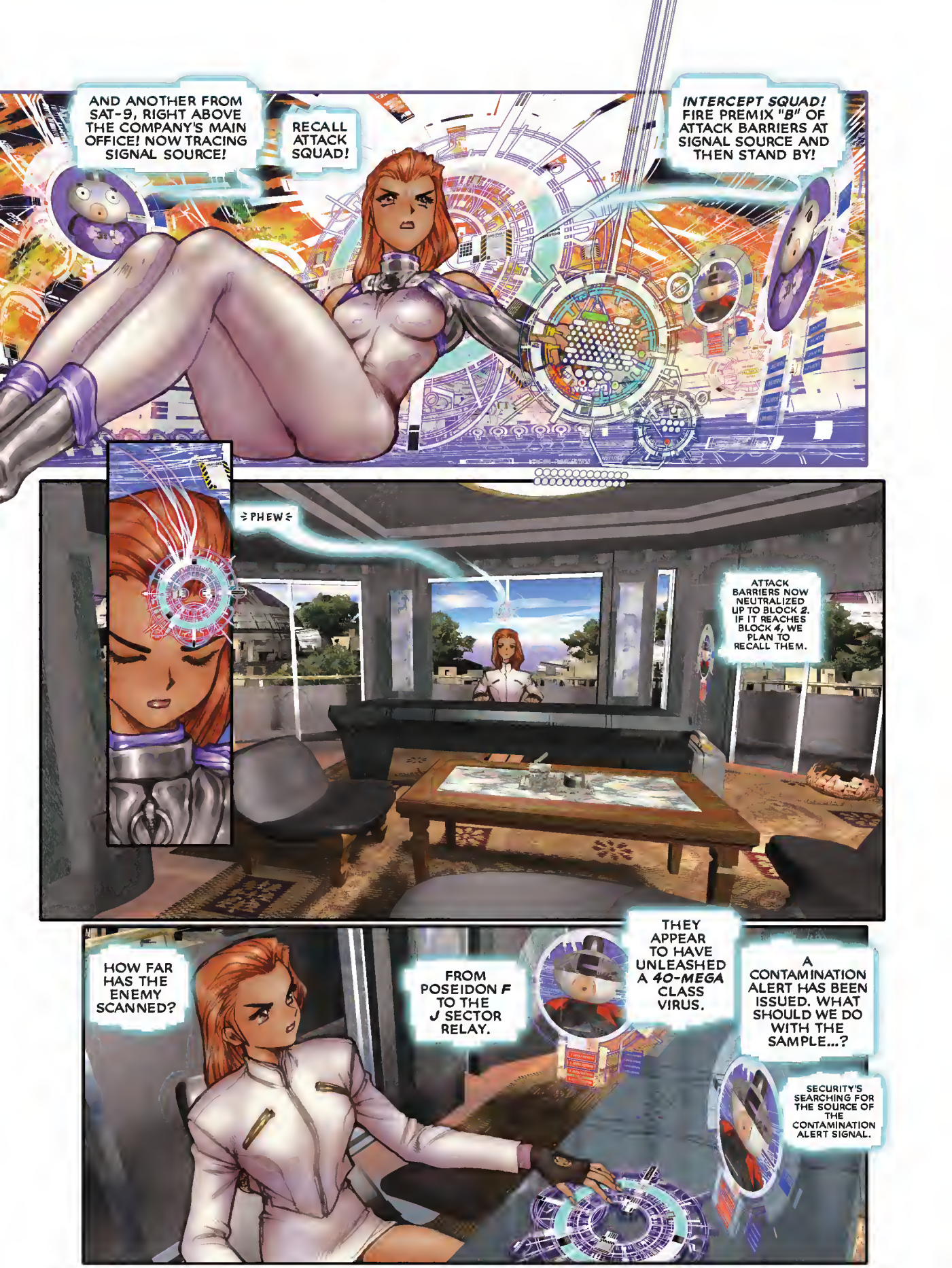

SO THIS IS THE LEADER...SHE'S SPOTTED THE SURVEILLANCE CAMERA... *HMM!*
NO ATTEMPT AT IMAGE MANIPULATION. SO SHE KNOWS WHAT WE'RE DOING AND IS TRYING TO LEAD US ON.
000.000.000.052
FILE-0081
SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4
CAUTION!
DATA PROTECTED


HMM... MONNABIA DOESN'T HAVE MUCH OF AN INTELLIGENCE NETWORK, SO I WONDER...
REPORT FILE
IMMIGRATION, CIVIL RECORDS, LICENSES, BANK ACCOUNTS, POLICE, MILITARY, INSURANCE, HOSPITALS, CREDIT BUREAUS...
OKAY, HERE'S A CANDIDATE... WITH AN AI SUPPORT SYSTEM TOO GOOD TO BE FREE MARKET.
JUST WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR. ♥
OKAY, WE'LL START WITH HER INITIALIZATION SETTINGS AT THE E-BRAIN CO-OP.
STAND BY WITH FOUR DECOYS, PLUS C42 ANTI-PROBE AND C41 ANTI-INTERCEPT DEVICES.
LOCKING IN VPN TUNNEL ON SAT-12.
WONDER IF WE'LL GET A CONNECTION...

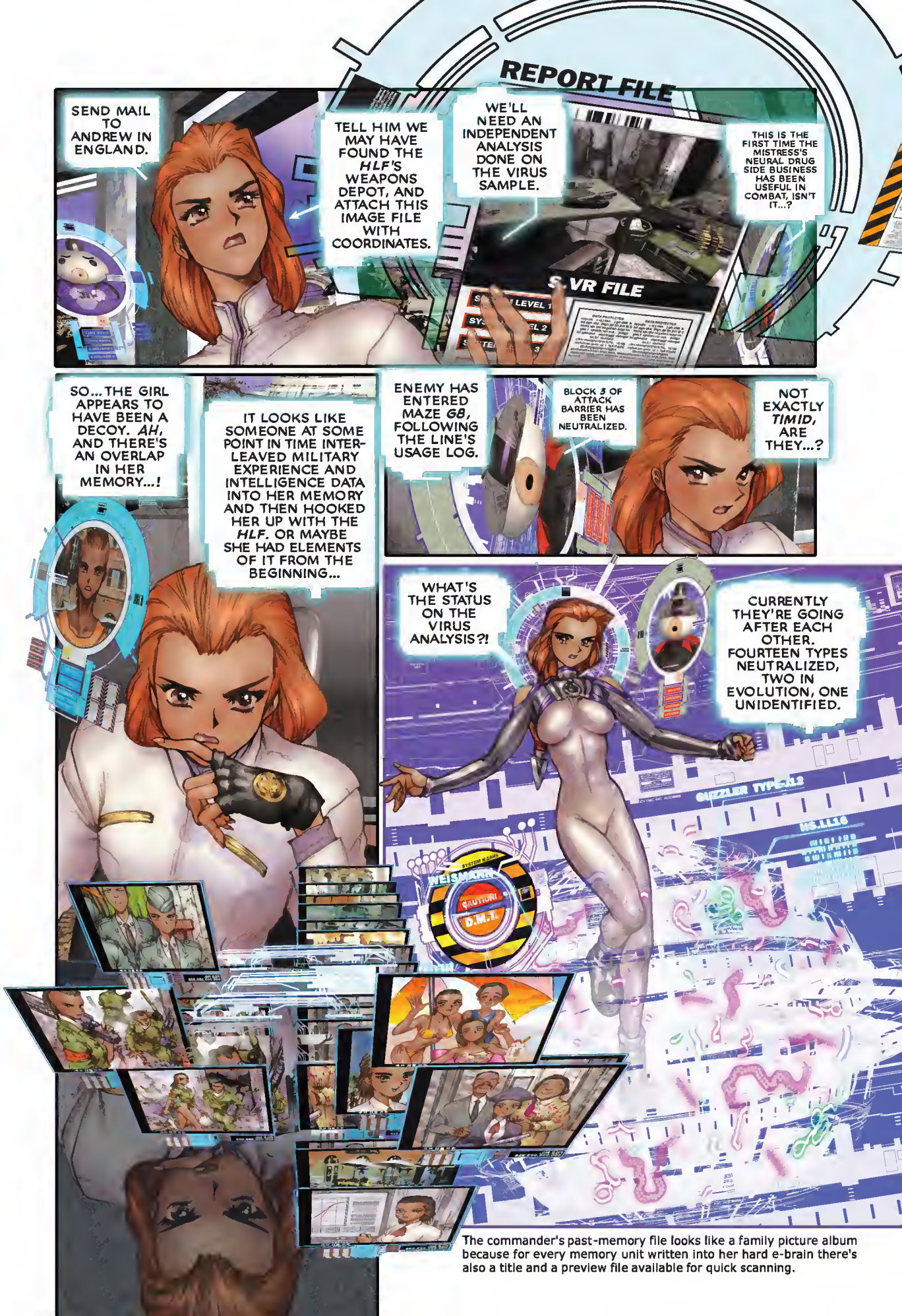



IBOGAINE: Name of psychedelic substance derived from the roots of the iboga plant from Central West Africa. Not particularly effective in e-brain wars, but maybe just easy for these folks to obtain locally.

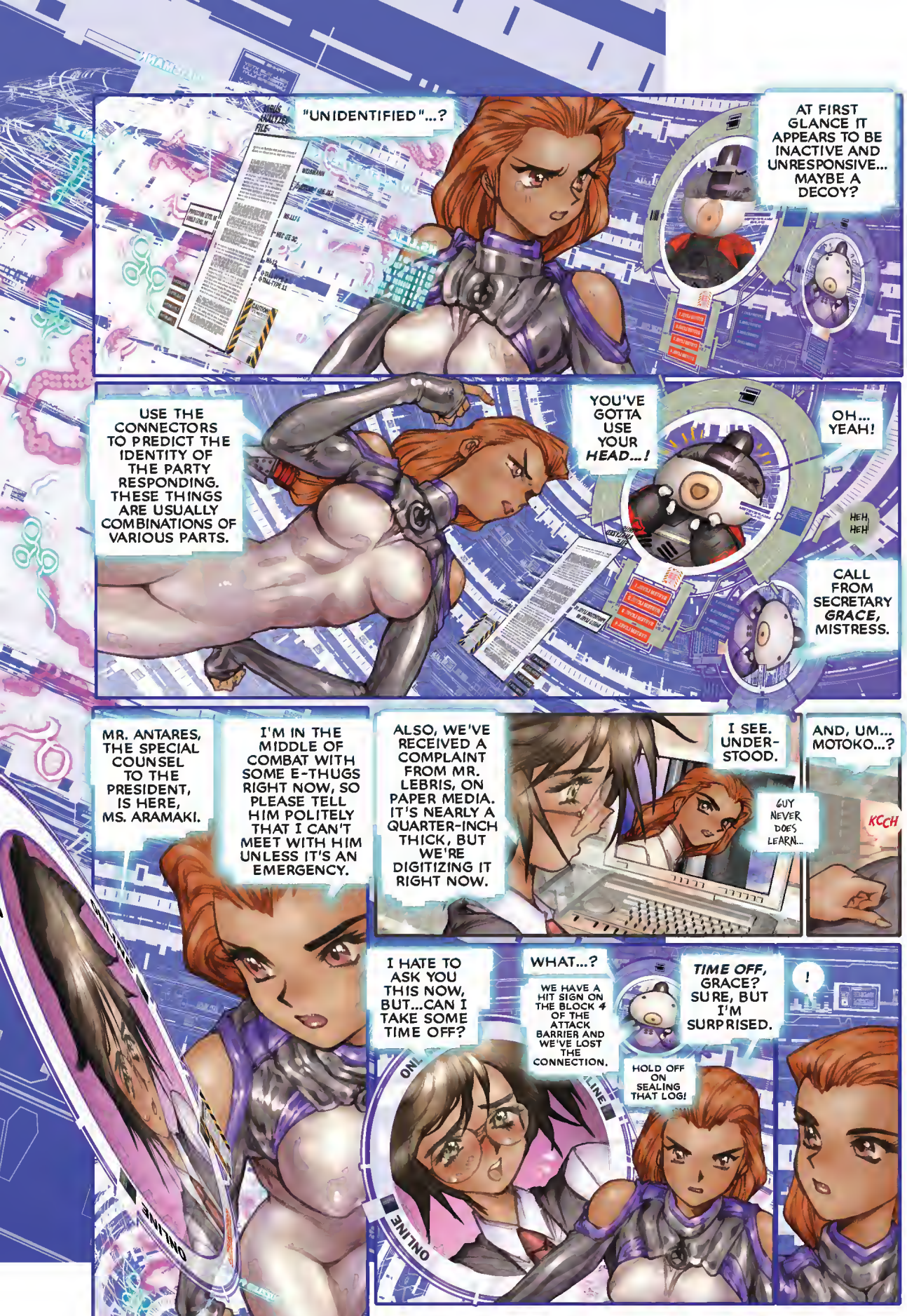
GOT A RESPONSE FROM SCANNING SAT-7. SWITCHING TO ROUTE C.
CONFIRMING TARGET COORDINATES...
GETTING SCAN RESPONSE FROM ROUTE C, SAT-12!!
PRETTY FAST FOR AUTO! PLUG IN A MAZE ON ROUTE C, SAT-6 TO GAIN TIME.
CAN'T BELIEVE THERE'S NO RESTRAINING MECHANISM!
ALL BARRIERS PENETRATED... INJECTING VIRUS INTO CORE PROCESSES...
FWHDD
COPYING PERIPHERAL MEMORY TO DECOY 4...
Vmmm
OKAY-- PULL ALL CONNECTION TRACES OUT OF ENEMY HARDWARE!
CONFIRMING INCREASE IN DRUGS INJECTED... YOW!
HOW COULD THEY DO A REVERSE PROBE UNDER THESE CONDITIONS?!
WONDER IF WE COULD USE THE ORGANIZATION'S DIRECTORY AND JUMP TO SOMEONE ELSE'S BRAIN...?
Vmmm
Vmmm
?!
WE HAVE A SCAN RESPONSE FROM ROUTE C, SAT-8...



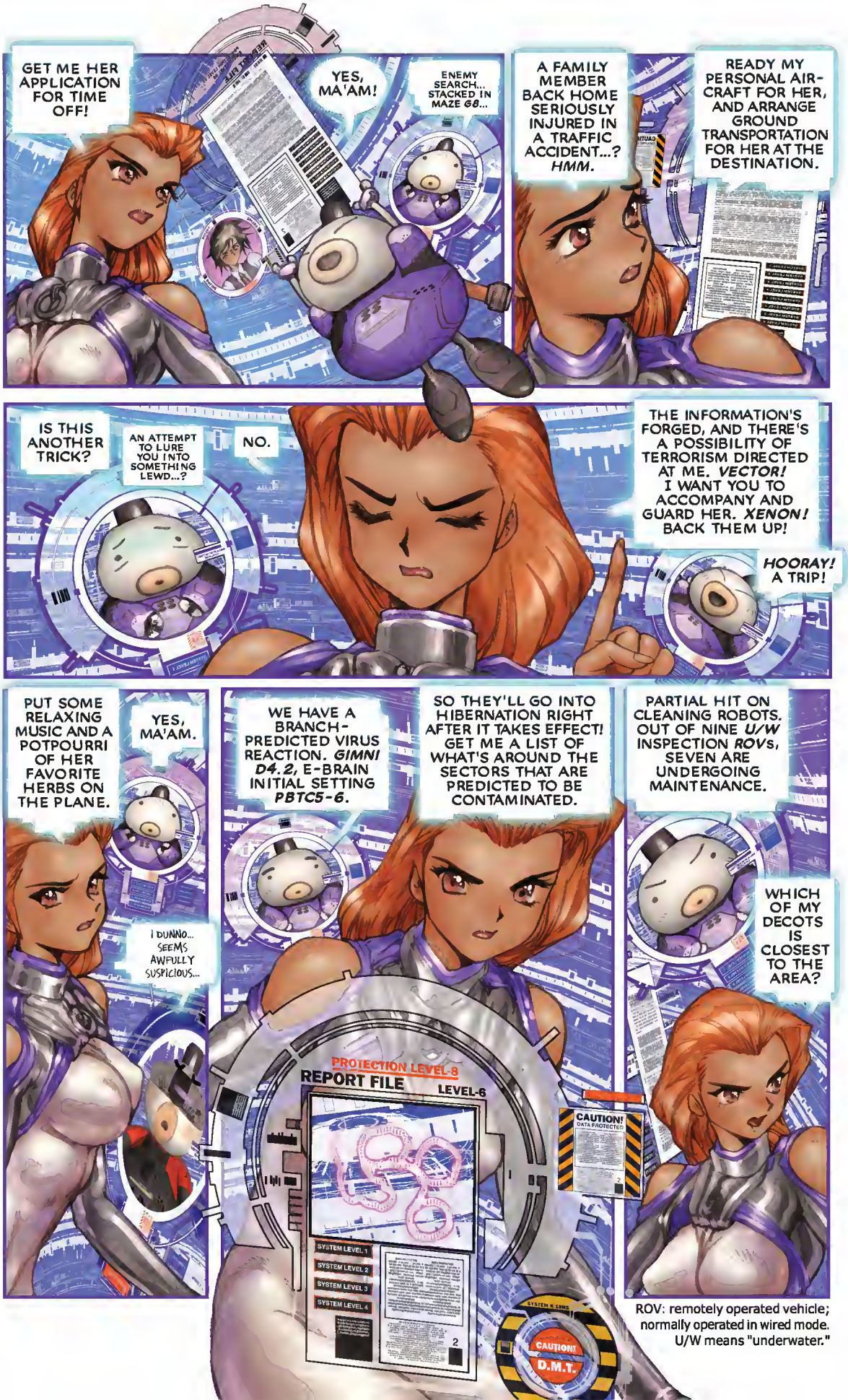

There really aren't any "data disks" like these floating in physical space. To Motoko's eyes (e-brain), it just "looks" like they are. Also, the reason her mouth isn't moving is because the conversations are all taking place at the e-brain level. In terms of timing, the enemy intervened with the satellite above the company's headquarters too soon (they should have intervened when the girl was convulsing under the neurotoxic effect of the hyperdose of ibogaine), but that's because Motoko's neural drug strategy was more effective than they expected.



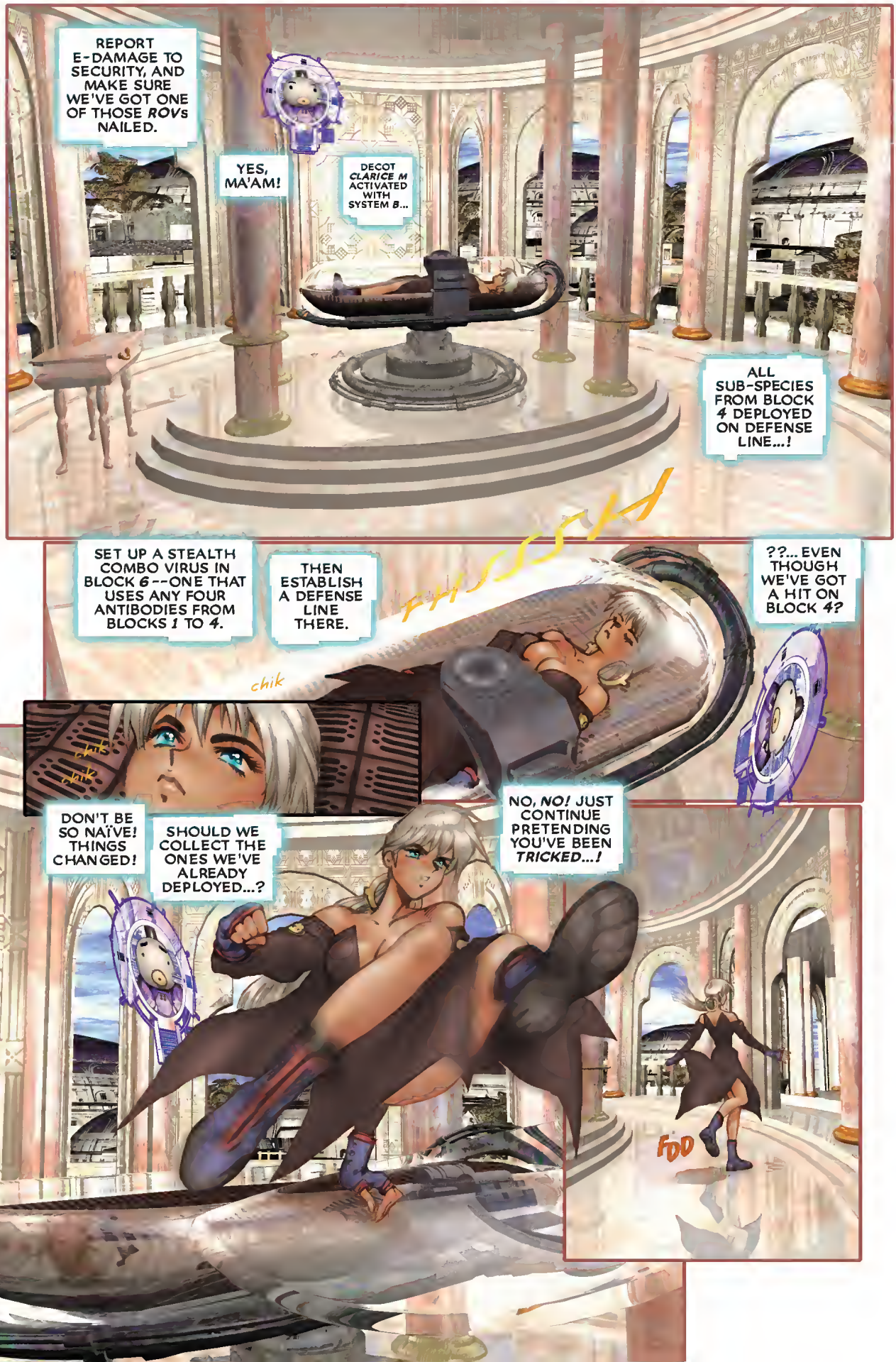

The commander's past-memory file looks like a family picture album because for every memory unit written into her hard e-brain there's also a title and a preview file available for quick scanning.

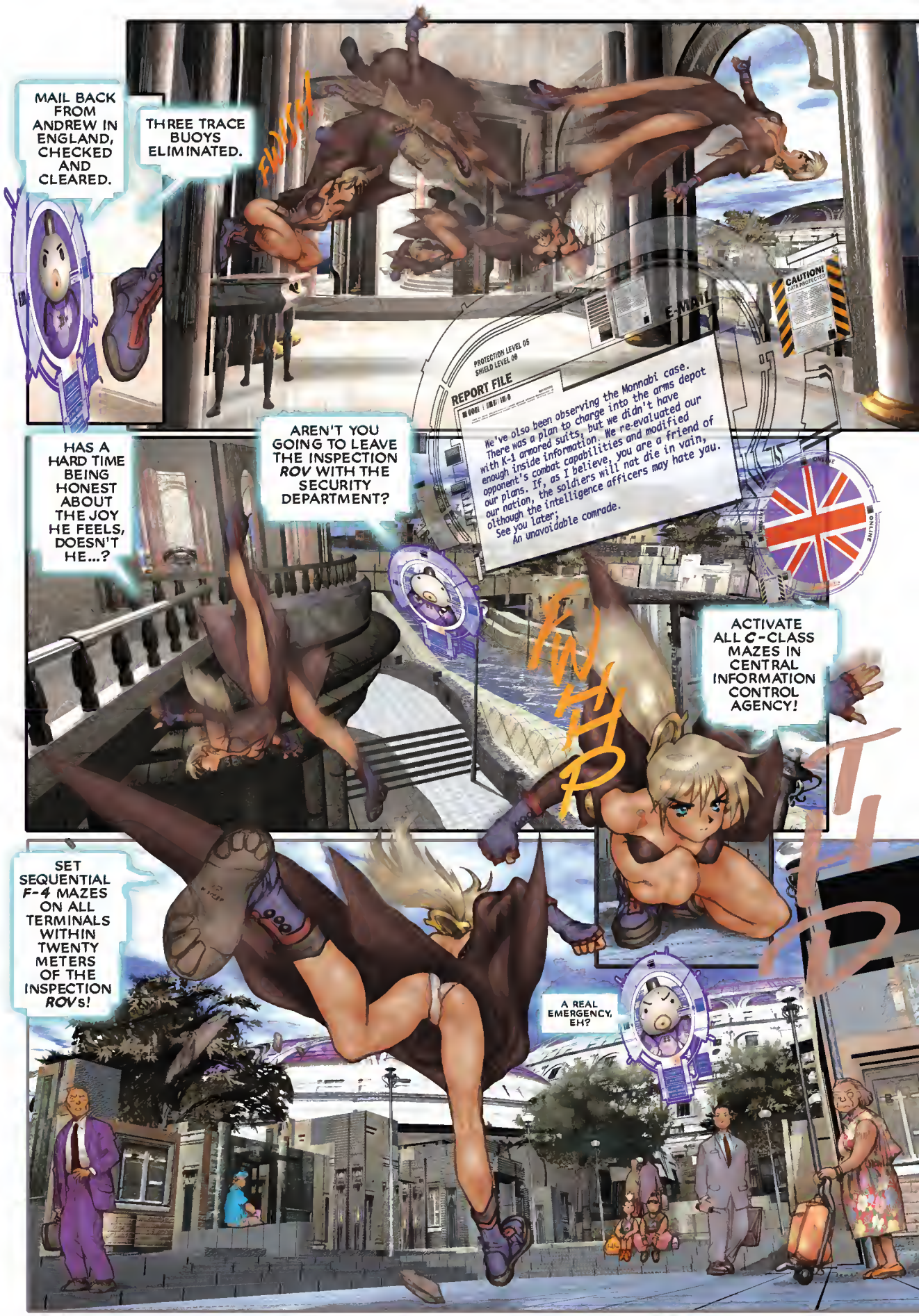



The image of Grace the secretary indicates she's "online," but she's really not, technically. She's just connected via a desktop computer to the independent terminals in Motoko's subordinates; they indirectly see the images and transmit them to Motoko's brain via their own e-brains.




ROV: remotely operated vehicle; normally operated in wired mode. U/W means "underwater."


REPORT E-DAMAGE TO SECURITY, AND MAKE SURE WE'VE GOT ONE OF THOSE ROVs NAILED.
YES, MA'AM!
DECOT CLARICE M ACTIVATED WITH SYSTEM B...
ALL SUB-SPECIES FROM BLOCK 4 DEPLOYED ON DEFENSE LINE...!
SET UP A STEALTH COMBO VIRUS IN BLOCK 6--ONE THAT USES ANY FOUR ANTIBODIES FROM BLOCKS 1 TO 4.
THEN ESTABLISH A DEFENSE LINE THERE.
FHSSSH
??... EVEN THOUGH WE'VE GOT A HIT ON BLOCK 4?
chik
chik
chik
DON'T BE SO NAÏVE! THINGS CHANGED!
SHOULD WE COLLECT THE ONES WE'VE ALREADY DEPLOYED...?
NO, NO! JUST CONTINUE PRETENDING YOU'VE BEEN TRICKED...!
FDD



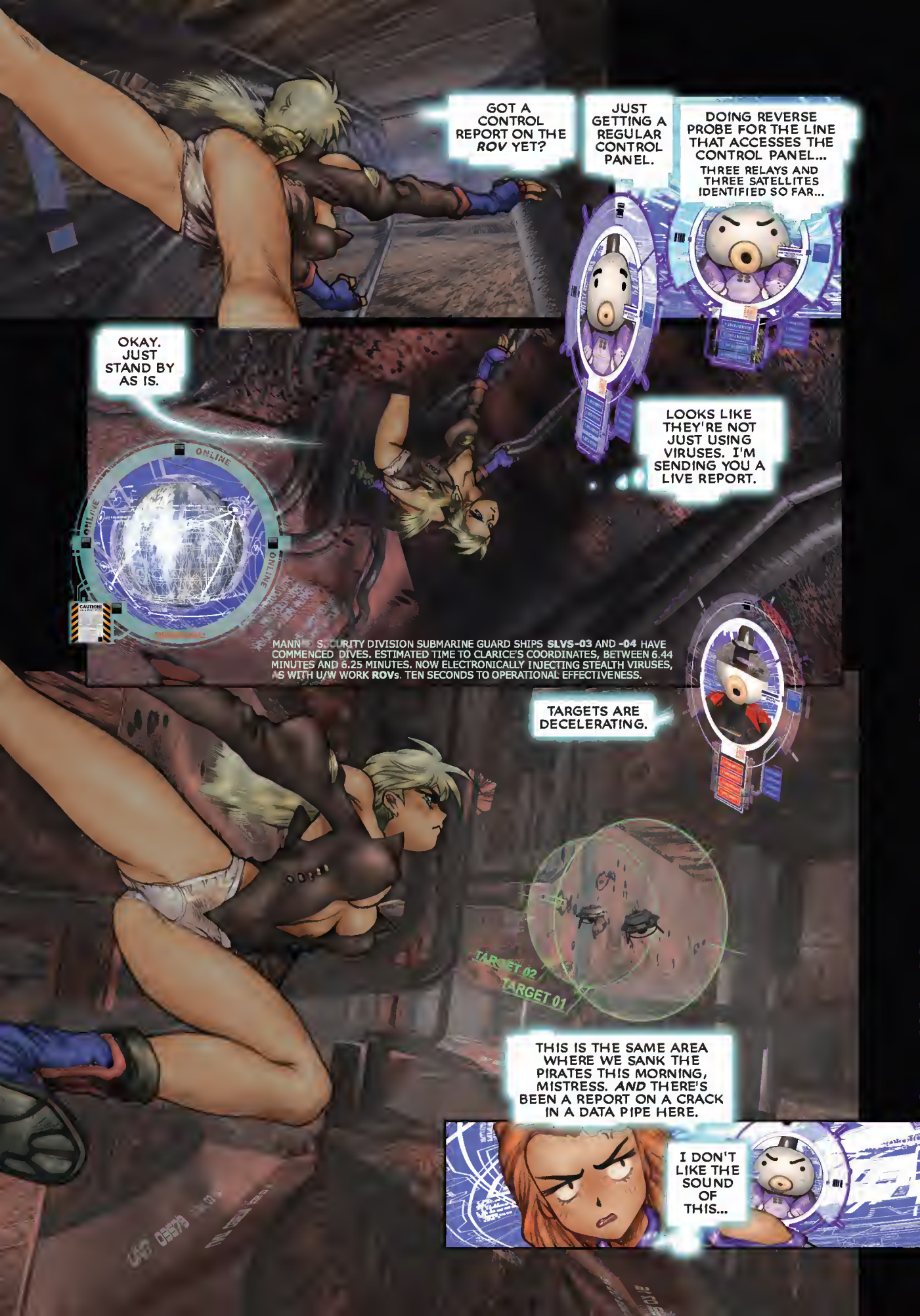

"Stealth Combo" virus: When an opponent uses antibodies to neutralize an attack barrier, they can be treated as components, combined, and then activated as a virus. Used alone they're harmless, and normally very tiny, with reproduction held to a minimum. As a result, it may be more accurate to describe them as *prions*—program fragments with "virus-like" traits.

When moving among buildings in urban areas, Motoko normally doesn't run along the edge of their roofs, because she can easily be spotted from the street. Poseidon's structures seem to be stone, but they're really made of a type of plastic, so she's actually running along the edges for safety reasons (also, if she fell through the roof she'd lose time). This time she's not really worried about being spotted from the street. She *is* worried about being observed by satellite, however....

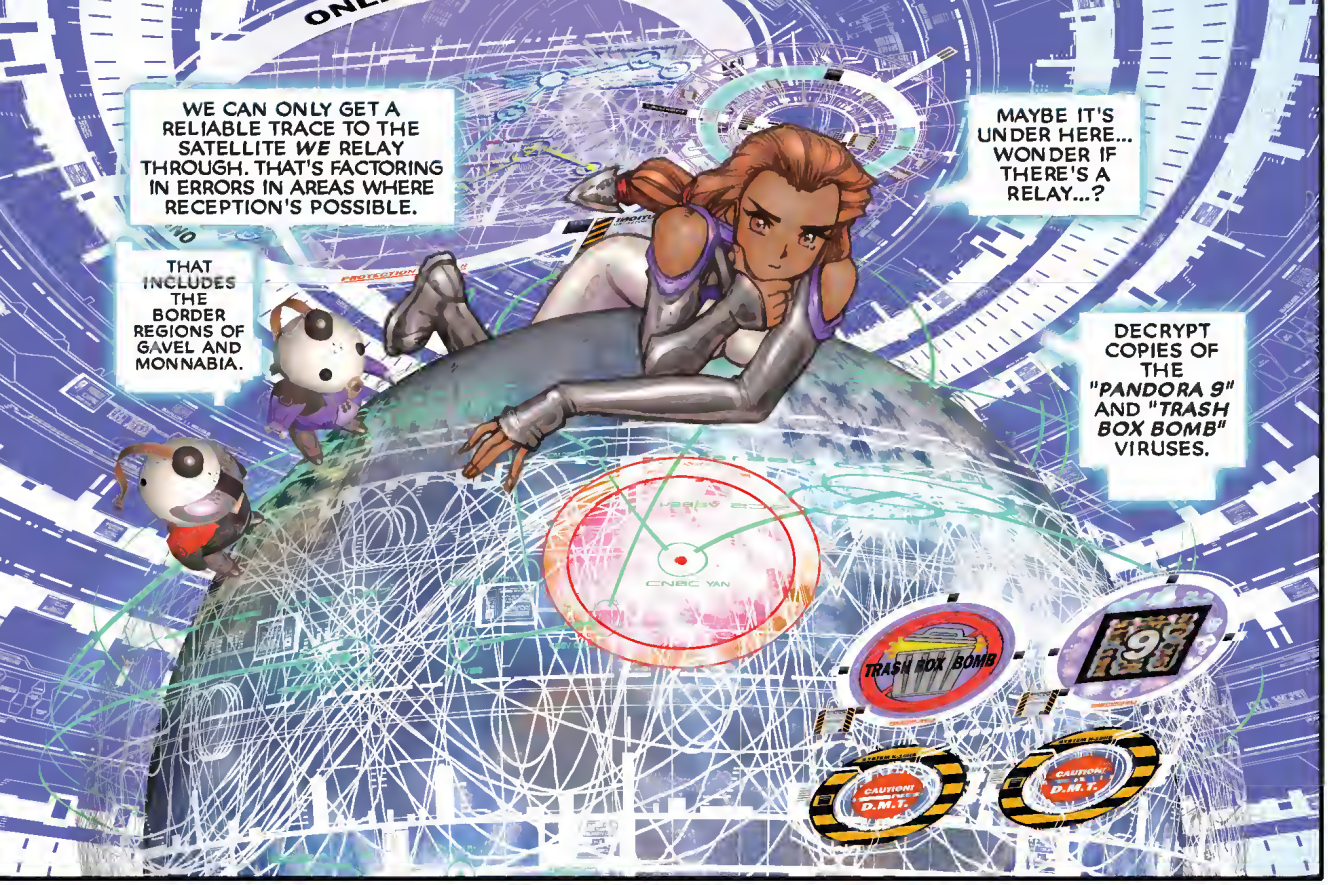
Clarice is a decot, so compared to Motoko's body (which is made of titanium and carbon nanotube materials), Clarice's is extremely lightweight...but nonetheless considerably heavier than a human's, so she's not very well-suited for swimming. Motoko regrets not having had her land spread-eagled, so the water resistance would have slowed her down better.

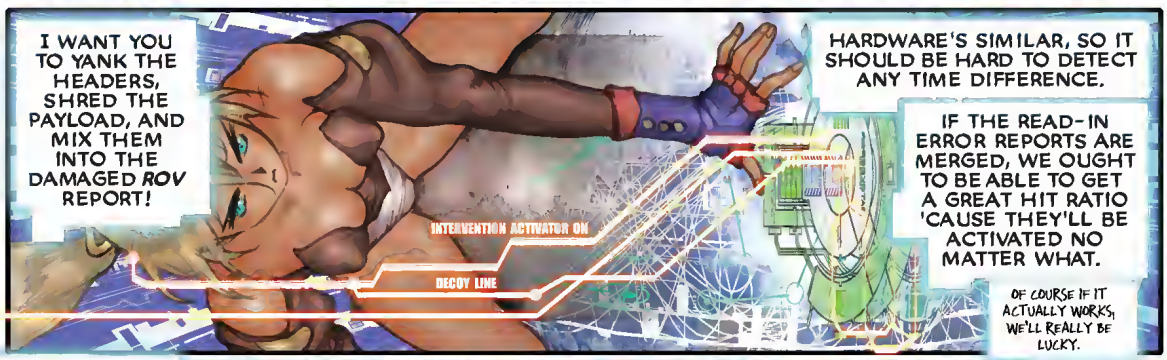
Decots don't really breathe. There are bubbles coming out of Clarice's mouth because there was some air left in her body and it's leaking out.
ER...YOUR CLOTHES ARE CREATING TOO MUCH RESISTANCE. FOR MAXIMUM UNDERWATER SPEED, YOU OUGHT TO GET RID OF THEM.
YOU WISH.
THE EASIEST THING IS JUST TO FOLLOW THE PIPE.
IGNORING THE Y AXIS, OF COURSE, IT'S FASTER TO MOVE ON LAND.
HOW MANY MINUTES UNTIL I CATCH UP?
THIS IS TAKING ME TO THE BIO-ZONE.
APPROXIMATELY SEVEN MINUTES IN A STRAIGHT LINE. BUT SINCE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT OF COURSE THE TARGET HAS SELECTED, I'M ADDING A TWO-MINUTE BUFFER.
I'M LINKING WITH THE PHYSICAL MAP OF THE COM-CABLE NETWORK. GO AHEAD AND ISSUE AN INFO EVAC ORDER FOR THE BIO-ZONE.
ONLINE
PROTECTION LEVEL-8
HMM...THE INFO BARRIERS ARE REALLY HARDENED, SO I WONDER IF THEY'RE PLANNING TO PHYSICALLY JUMP OVER...?
DO THEY THINK THE SYSTEM'S THAT FRAGILE INTERNALLY? I DOUBT IT... THEY MOVE LIKE THEY'VE CHECKED THINGS OUT PRETTY WELL BEFORE COMING HERE.
P.I. STOCK FILE
CAUTION

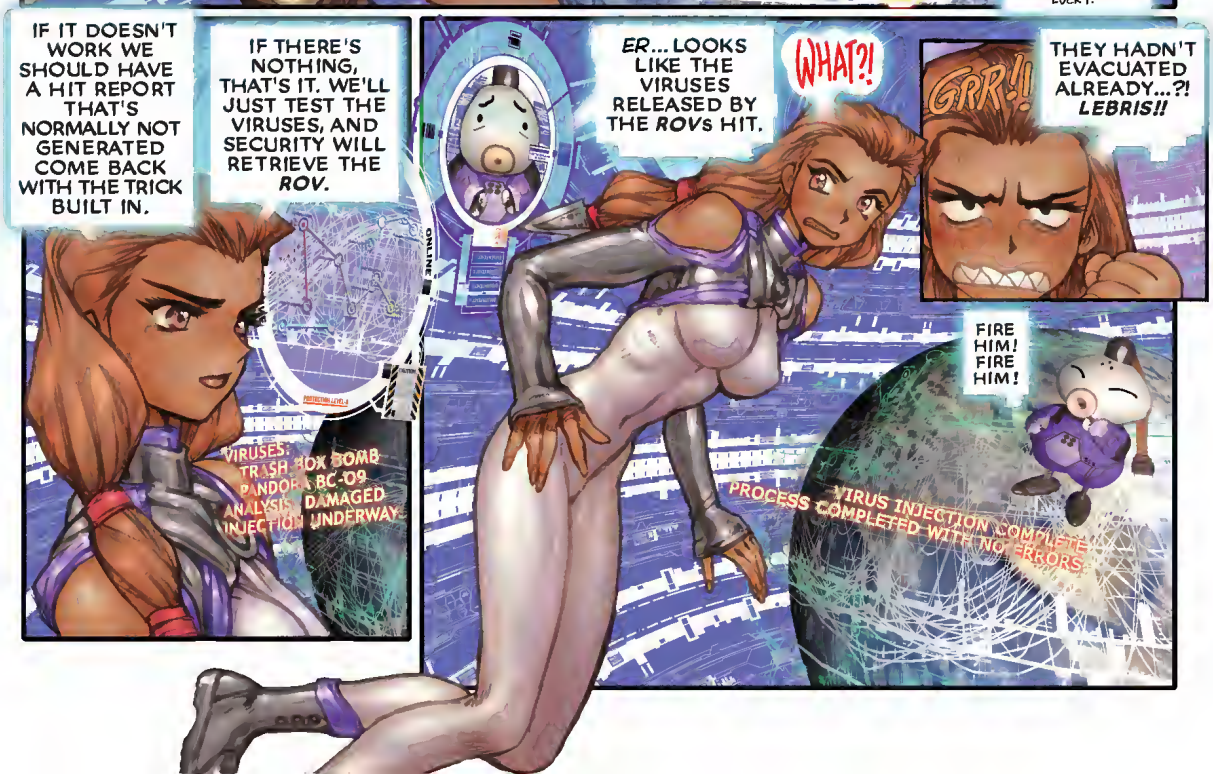
Of course, there's no need for a "remotely controlled humanoid terminal" to wear underwear, but let's just say Motoko's doing it out of habit.

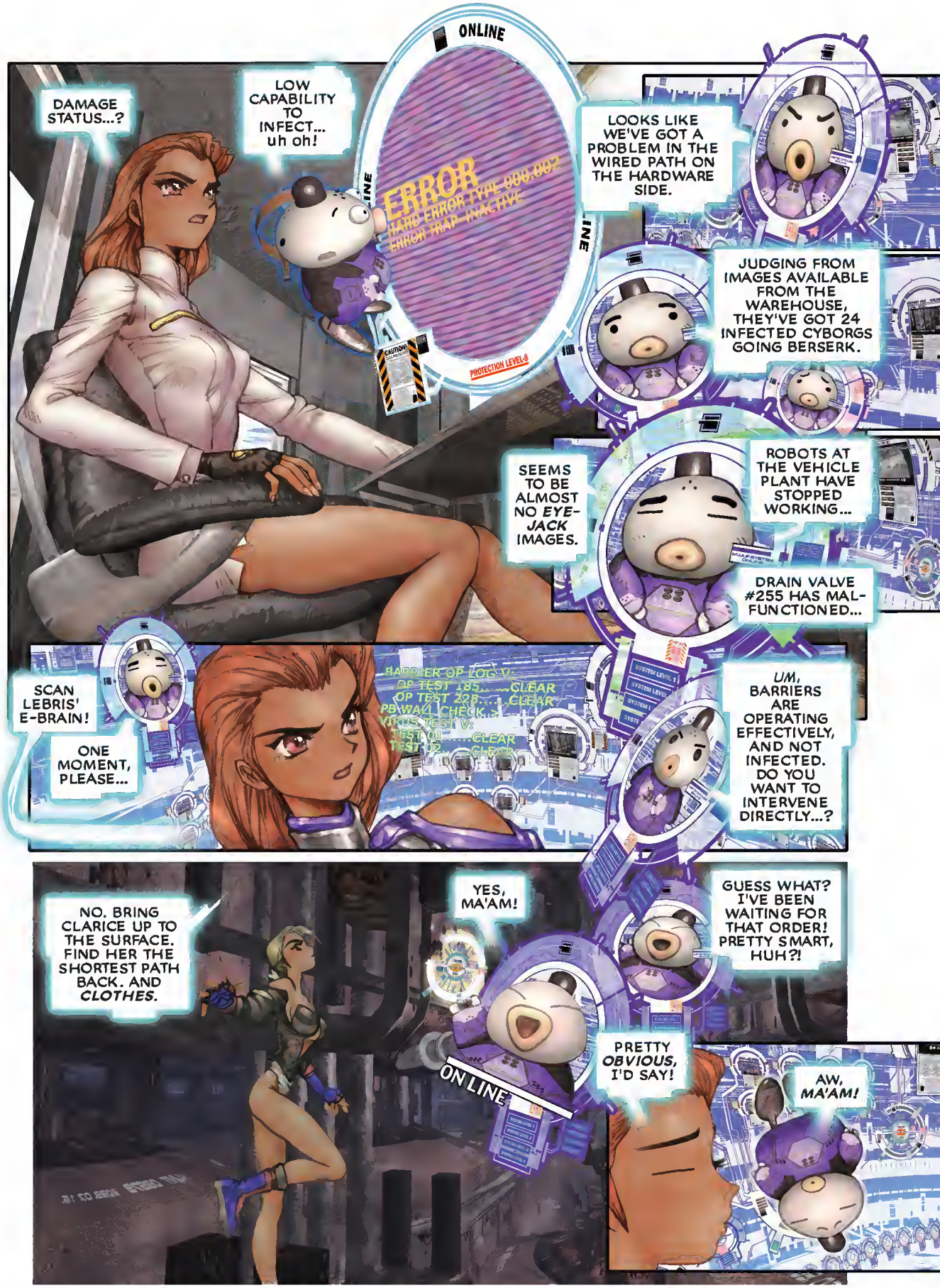

GOT A CONTROL REPORT ON THE ROV YET?
JUST GETTING A REGULAR CONTROL PANEL.
DOING REVERSE PROBE FOR THE LINE THAT ACCESSES THE CONTROL PANEL... THREE RELAYS AND THREE SATELLITES IDENTIFIED SO FAR...
OKAY. JUST STAND BY AS IS.
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE NOT JUST USING VIRUSES. I'M SENDING YOU A LIVE REPORT.
ONLINE
CAUTION
MANN[illegible] SECURITY DIVISION SUBMARINE GUARD SHIPS SLVS-03 AND -04 HAVE COMMENCED DIVES. ESTIMATED TIME TO CLARICE'S COORDINATES, BETWEEN 6.44 MINUTES AND 6.25 MINUTES. NOW ELECTRONICALLY INJECTING STEALTH VIRUSES, AS WITH U/W WORK ROVs. TEN SECONDS TO OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS.
TARGETS ARE DECELERATING.
TARGET 02
TARGET 01
THIS IS THE SAME AREA WHERE WE SANK THE PIRATES THIS MORNING, MISTRESS. AND THERE'S BEEN A REPORT ON A CRACK IN A DATA PIPE HERE.
I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS...

VSHHHH
VSHHHHHH
CHHK
VREE
VREEE
CHK
CHK
SHRAKK
KANGG


WE CAN ONLY GET A RELIABLE TRACE TO THE SATELLITE *WE* RELAY THROUGH. THAT'S FACTORING IN ERRORS IN AREAS WHERE RECEPTION'S POSSIBLE.
MAYBE IT'S UNDER HERE... WONDER IF THERE'S A RELAY...?
THAT INCLUDES THE BORDER REGIONS OF GAVEL AND MONNABIA.
DECRYPT COPIES OF THE *"PANDORA 9"* AND *"TRASH BOX BOMB"* VIRUSES.
TRASH BOX BOMB
CAUTION! D.M.T.
CAUTION! D.M.T.

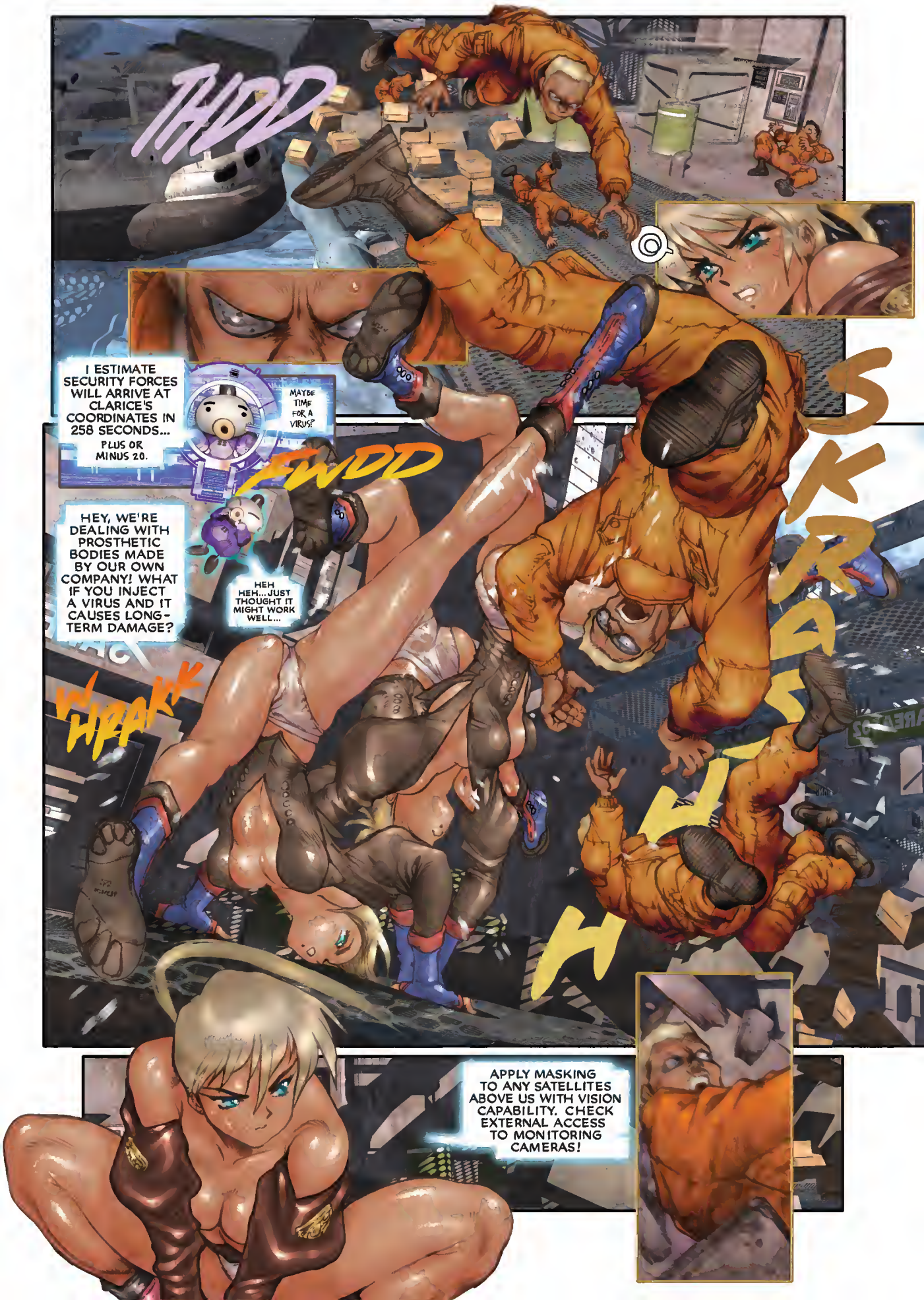

I WANT YOU TO YANK THE HEADERS, SHRED THE PAYLOAD, AND MIX THEM INTO THE DAMAGED *ROV* REPORT!
HARDWARE'S SIMILAR, SO IT SHOULD BE HARD TO DETECT ANY TIME DIFFERENCE.
IF THE READ-IN ERROR REPORTS ARE MERGED, WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO GET A GREAT HIT RATIO 'CAUSE THEY'LL BE ACTIVATED NO MATTER WHAT.
OF COURSE IF IT ACTUALLY WORKS, WE'LL REALLY BE LUCKY.
INTERVENTION ACTIVATOR ON
DECOY LINE


IF IT DOESN'T WORK WE SHOULD HAVE A HIT REPORT THAT'S NORMALLY NOT GENERATED COME BACK WITH THE TRICK BUILT IN.
IF THERE'S NOTHING, THAT'S IT. WE'LL JUST TEST THE VIRUSES, AND SECURITY WILL RETRIEVE THE *ROV*.
VIRUSES: TRASH BOX BOMB PANDORA BC-09 ANALYSIS: DAMAGED INJECTION: UNDERWAY
*ER*... LOOKS LIKE THE VIRUSES RELEASED BY THE *ROV*s HIT.
WHAT?!
GRR-!!
THEY HADN'T EVACUATED ALREADY...?! *LEBRIS!!*
FIRE HIM! FIRE HIM!
VIRUS INJECTION COMPLETE PROCESS COMPLETED WITH NO ERRORS




EYE-JACK: This refers to a system of hijacking the vision system of 100 randomly selected Poseidon e-brain workers and collecting information. In the case of workers that had e-brain operations done in Poseidon, "back door" access for Motoko has already been built into their initial settings and hardware. This is something Motoko incorporated at the design stage (it's one of her jobs). It's a low-cost, low-risk solution compared to doing a brand-new e-brain 'jack. It's covered under the e-brain ethics law and illegal, of course, but the chances of Motoko being discovered are nearly zero.

NOW INJECTING ANTIBODIES INTO CYBORGS AND THE VEHICLE PLANT ROBOTICS.
WE HAVE A FUNCTIONAL FAILURE IN CLARICE'S LEFT EAR. ABILITY TO CORRECT IS DECREASING.
WATER LEAK?
CLARICE CONFIRMED DETECTED BY MONITORING NETWORK.
ONLINE
NO PROBLEM IN INNER EAR.
THEN CLOSE OFF THE OUTER EAR.
NO ANTIBODY EFFECT APPARENT. CLOSEST CYBORG TEN METERS TO THE LEFT.
INVESTIGATING CAUSE.
SENDING SPECIFICS.
WANT ME TO INJECT VIRUSES...?
NO. LEAVE IT UP TO SECURITY.
OH, DAMN HE ALREADY SAW ME...
RASH
HELP!
NO!!
HEY!
HUGH!


THUD
I ESTIMATE SECURITY FORCES WILL ARRIVE AT CLARICE'S COORDINATES IN 258 SECONDS... PLUS OR MINUS 20.
MAYBE TIME FOR A VIRUS?
FWDD
HEY, WE'RE DEALING WITH PROSTHETIC BODIES MADE BY OUR OWN COMPANY! WHAT IF YOU INJECT A VIRUS AND IT CAUSES LONG-TERM DAMAGE?
HEH HEH... JUST THOUGHT IT MIGHT WORK WELL...
WHAAK
SKRASH
APPLY MASKING TO ANY SATELLITES ABOVE US WITH VISION CAPABILITY. CHECK EXTERNAL ACCESS TO MONITORING CAMERAS!

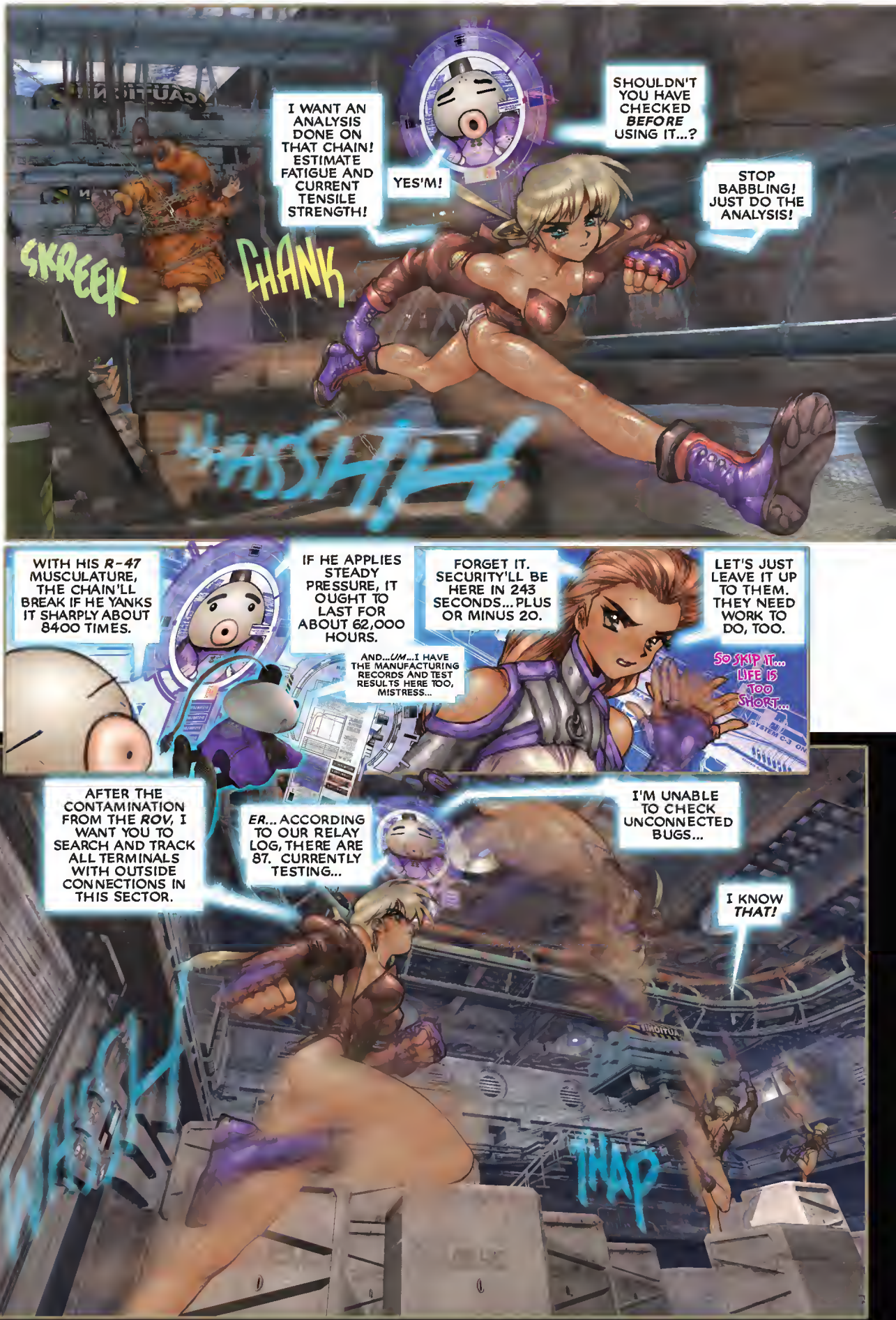
KRAK
KANG
TARGETING SYSTEM ACTIVE
ONLINE
CAUTION!
PROTECTION LEVEL-0

SSHHRAK
BRINNGG
SSHHCHAKK

WHIP
DAMN!

KSHAK
K
WHOOPS... MAYBE I OVERDID IT...?
SKRASSA
AAH!

SHAKE
WHIRRRR
T-013 DEPOT
B 12
GCHNK
CAUTION!!
KCHAK KCHAK KCHAK
DEPOT
POST
KCHAK


I WANT AN ANALYSIS DONE ON THAT CHAIN! ESTIMATE FATIGUE AND CURRENT TENSILE STRENGTH!
YES'M!
SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE CHECKED *BEFORE* USING IT...?
STOP BABBLING! JUST DO THE ANALYSIS!
SKREEK
CHANK
WHSHH
WITH HIS *R-47* MUSCULATURE, THE CHAIN'LL BREAK IF HE YANKS IT SHARPLY ABOUT 8400 TIMES.
IF HE APPLIES STEADY PRESSURE, IT OUGHT TO LAST FOR ABOUT 62,000 HOURS.
AND...*UM*...I HAVE THE MANUFACTURING RECORDS AND TEST RESULTS HERE TOO, MISTRESS...
FORGET IT. SECURITY'LL BE HERE IN 243 SECONDS...PLUS OR MINUS 20.
LET'S JUST LEAVE IT UP TO THEM. THEY NEED WORK TO DO, TOO.
SO SKIP IT... LIFE IS TOO SHORT...
AFTER THE CONTAMINATION FROM THE *ROV*, I WANT YOU TO SEARCH AND TRACK ALL TERMINALS WITH OUTSIDE CONNECTIONS IN THIS SECTOR.
*ER*...ACCORDING TO OUR RELAY LOG, THERE ARE 87. CURRENTLY TESTING...
I'M UNABLE TO CHECK UNCONNECTED BUGS...
I KNOW *THAT!*
WHSH
TNAP

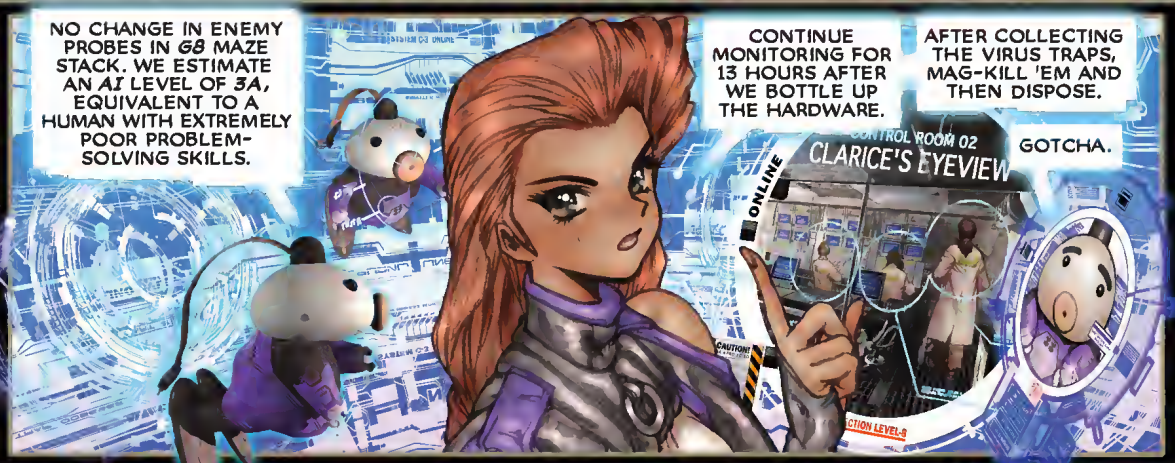
I'VE TRACKED DOWN SOME APPROPRIATE CLOTHES IN THE CONTROL ROOM.
I'LL SEND INFO ON THE OWNER.
OKAY, GOOD.
TARGET
WHISH
CAUTION
?
JACKET
TARGET
ONLY A JACKET...?
WHAT? YOU NEED A THREE-PIECE SUIT?
DANTE, YOU JUST GOT DEMOTED TO CLEAN-UP CREW!
B-BUT... WHY?
MAYBE 'CAUSE HER SKIN LACKS PROTECTIVE COVERING?
NAW, SHE JUST WANTS TO TRY WEARING PANTS...

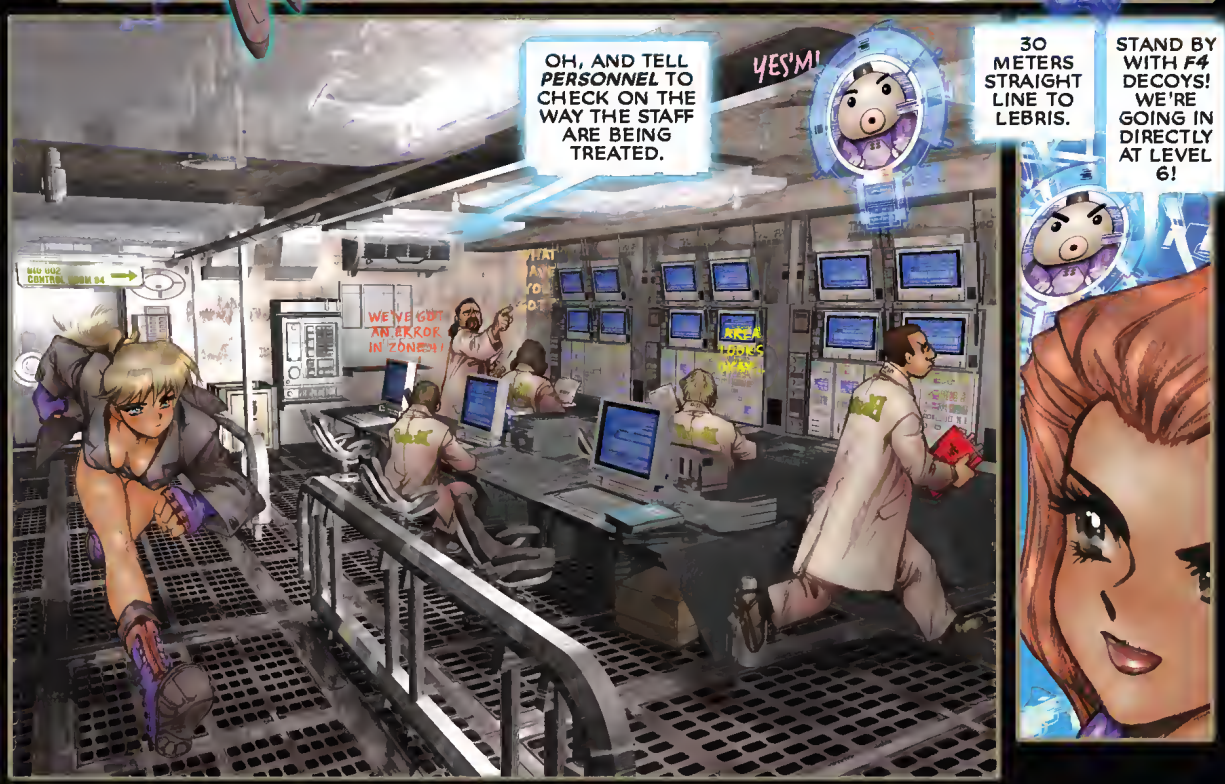
KLDD
SWHSSHHH
FWHAM
HANNIBAL! INFILTRATE LEBRIS AND SET HIS CLARICE RECOGNITION MASKING TO DEGREE 8...!
ACTIVATING NO. 2 MASK ARRAY.
FWHAM
WASSH
I'VE GOT LEBRIS UNDER CONTROL DOWN TO LEVEL 6, SO FAR. HE'S IN BASEMENT FOUR, BELOW SEA-LEVEL.
DON'T USE THE E-BRAIN CORE-- JUST MAKE IT LOOK LIKE HE'S CHECKING THE SYSTEM, AND STAND BY WITH EIGHT DECOYS.
SKREEK
beep
beep
beep
beep
beep
beep
KSHAK
PHEW
EMERGENCY LOCK STATUS: RELEASED

KSSHH
CHAK
NO GO. LOOKS LIKE THE ENEMY'S ALREADY USING LEBRIS AS A PAWN, OR ELSE HE'S A VICTIM OF THE FIRST ATTACK...
PROBABLY THE LATTER BUT AT LEAST WE CAN TRY AGAIN.
CLEAN ROOM ACTIVE 000.002.045
WHOOSH
STAND BY TO INJECT LEBRIS WITH THE ROV VIRUS.
CAN I RELEASE THE BARRIERS, ETCETERA...?
HEH, HEH!
GO AHEAD.
SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4

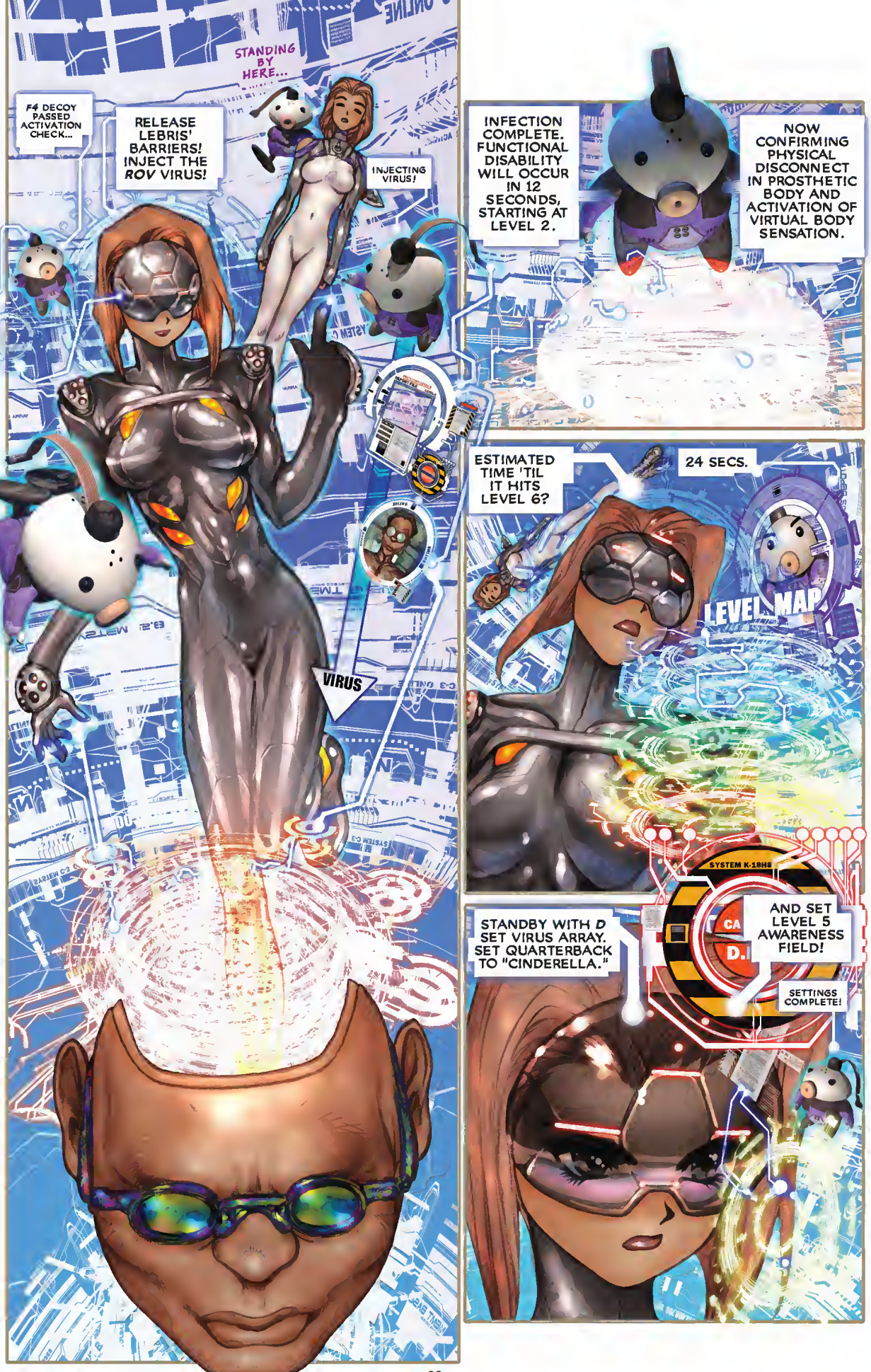
SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4
CONTACT AREA
CONTACT AREA
FWHDD
FWIP

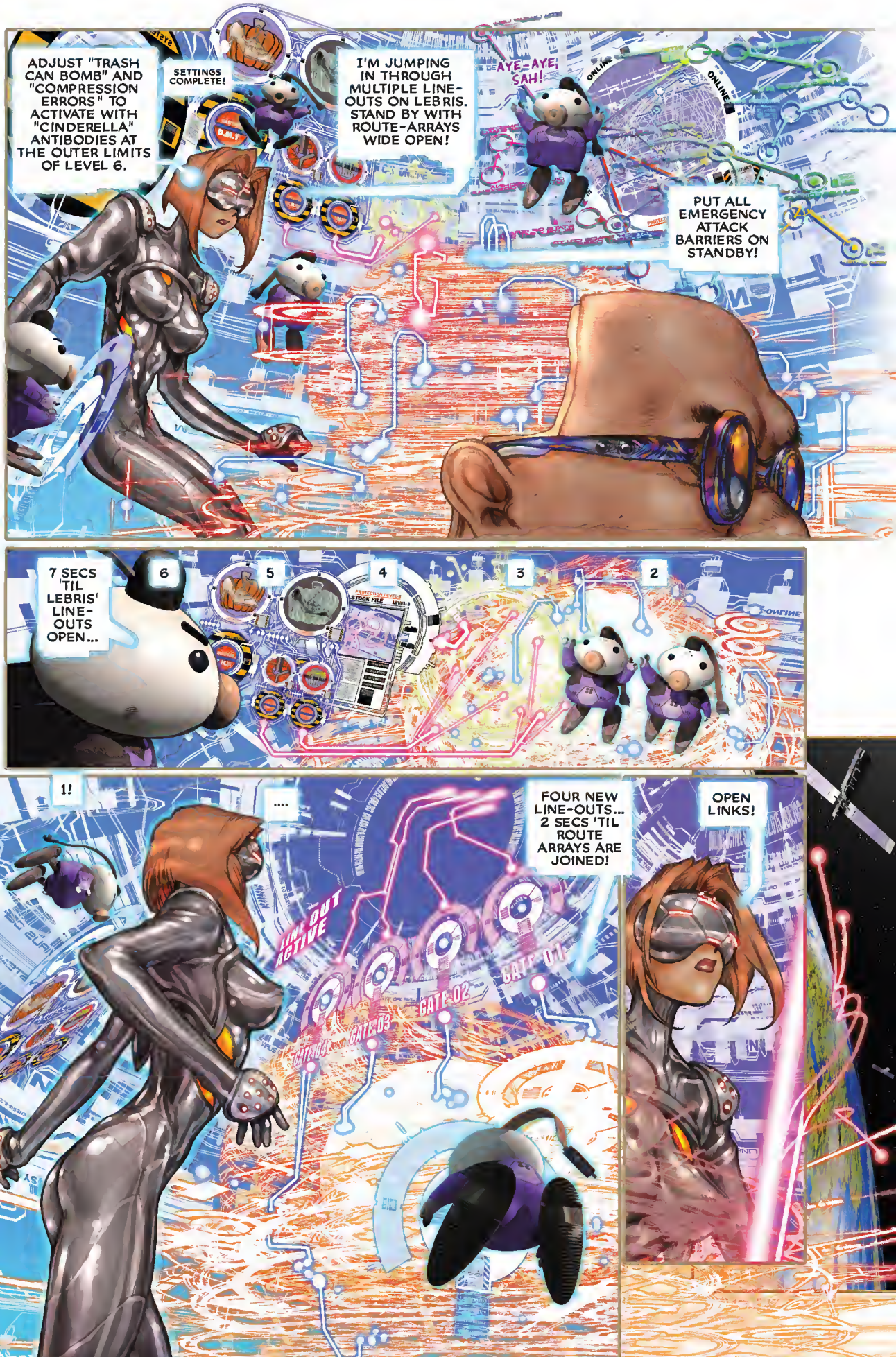
GET ME A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DAMAGE!
WE STILL HAVE NINE CYBORGS IN THE WARE-HOUSE AND THE VEHICLE PLANT TO TAKE CARE OF. THERE'S ALSO TWO NEW ONES CONTAMINATED IN ZONE C7242.
KEEP UP THE MONITORING.
F257-UNIT

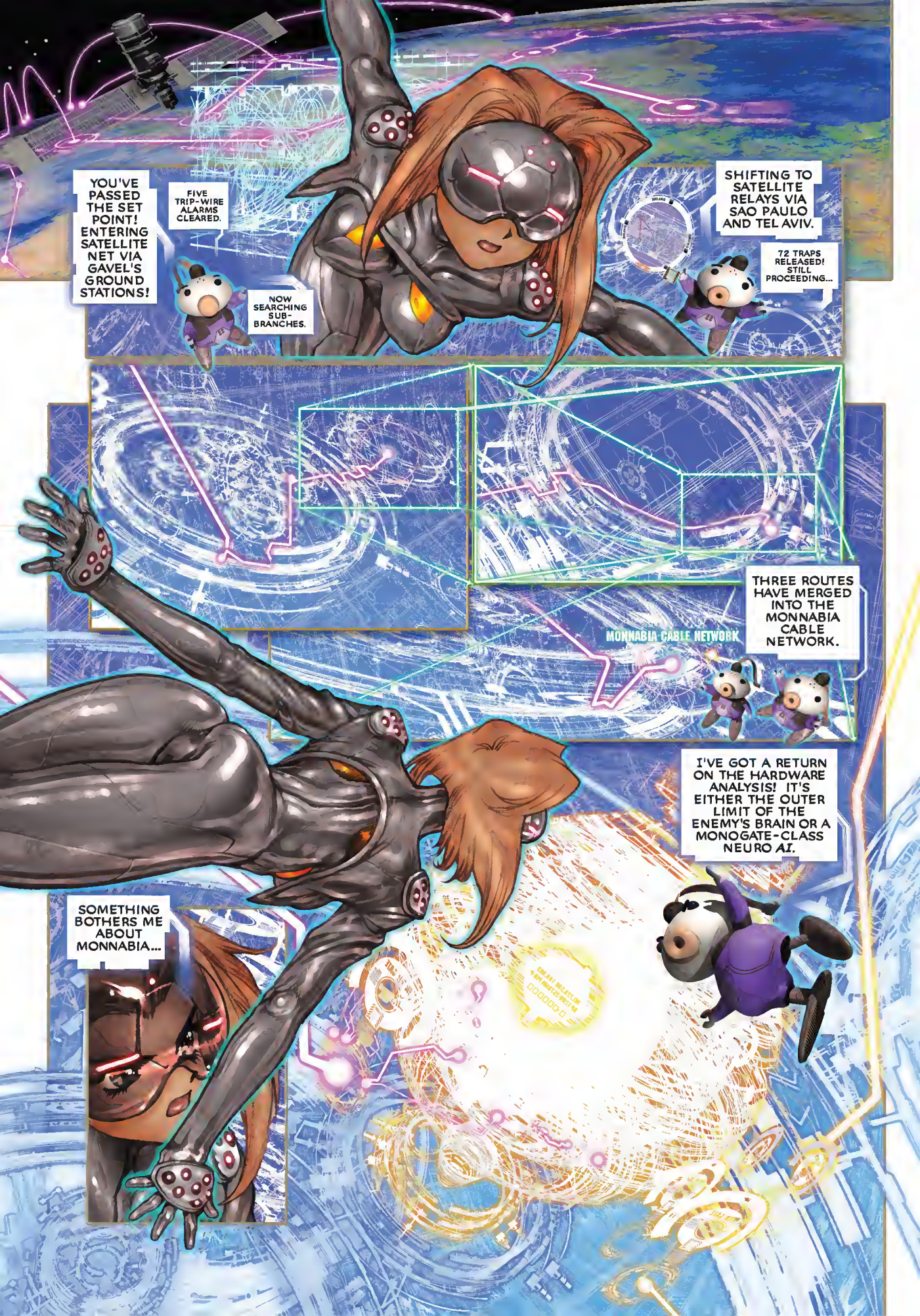

NO CHANGE IN ENEMY PROBES IN G8 MAZE STACK. WE ESTIMATE AN AI LEVEL OF 3A, EQUIVALENT TO A HUMAN WITH EXTREMELY POOR PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS.
CONTINUE MONITORING FOR 13 HOURS AFTER WE BOTTLE UP THE HARDWARE.
AFTER COLLECTING THE VIRUS TRAPS, MAG-KILL 'EM AND THEN DISPOSE.
GOTCHA.
CONTROL ROOM 02
CLARICE'S EYEVIEW
ONLINE

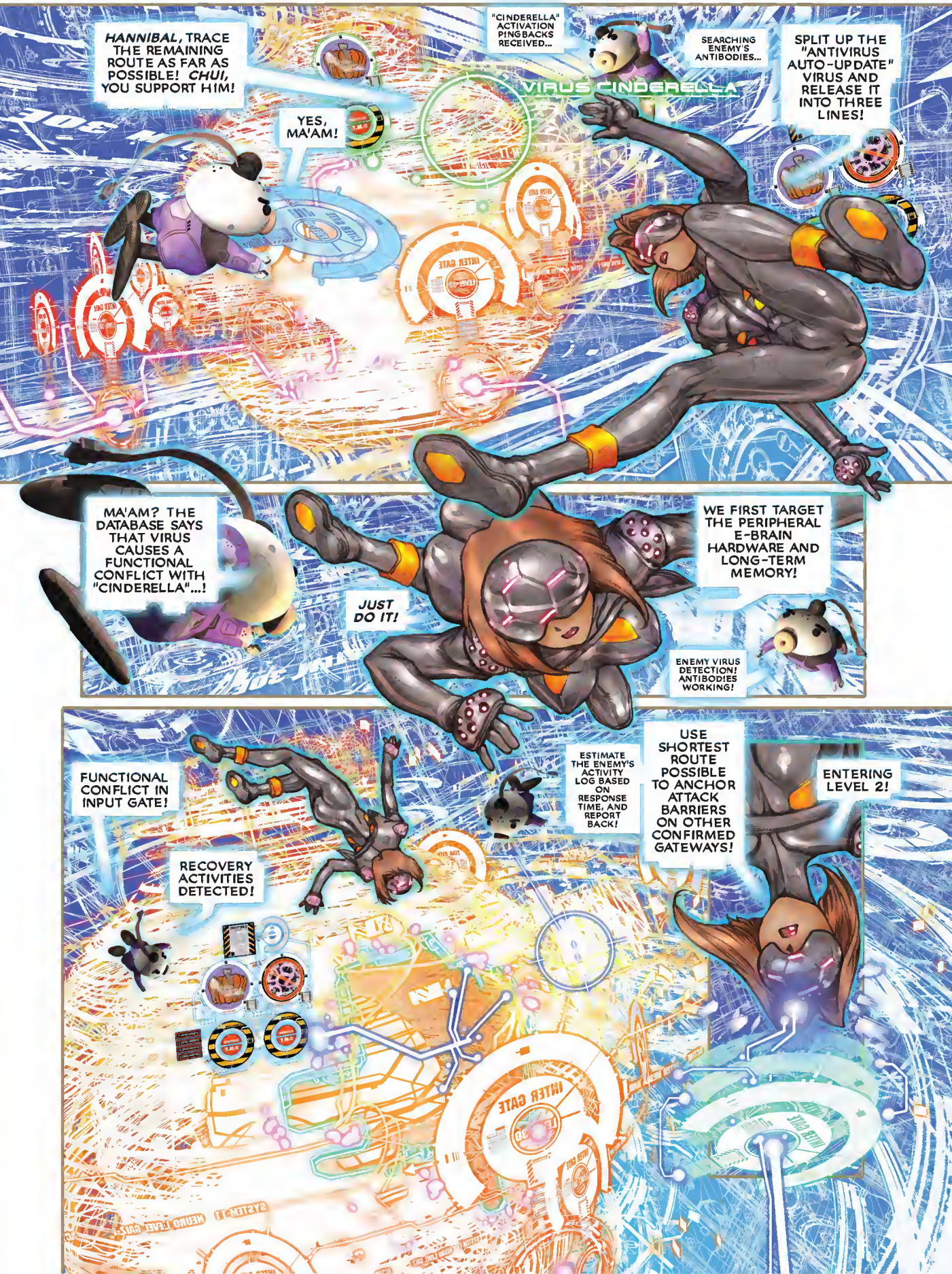

OH, AND TELL PERSONNEL TO CHECK ON THE WAY THE STAFF ARE BEING TREATED.
YES'M!
30 METERS STRAIGHT LINE TO LEBRIS.
STAND BY WITH F4 DECOYS! WE'RE GOING IN DIRECTLY AT LEVEL 6!
WE'VE GOT AN ERROR IN ZONE 3!

WHAT'S THE FASTEST ROUTE?
THE JACK'S BEHIND HIS RIGHT EAR--MEGAPA CORP *LN2* TERMINAL, LOT 33S-20.
OKAY!
WHSSH
FWIPP
LN-2 33S-20
THAP!
LINK CHECK! MAINTAIN SYSTEM CONTROL!
*SHIVA!* GUARD CLARICE'S HARDWARE!
CAN I DO A "STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS" ON HER? HEH HEH...
ONLINE

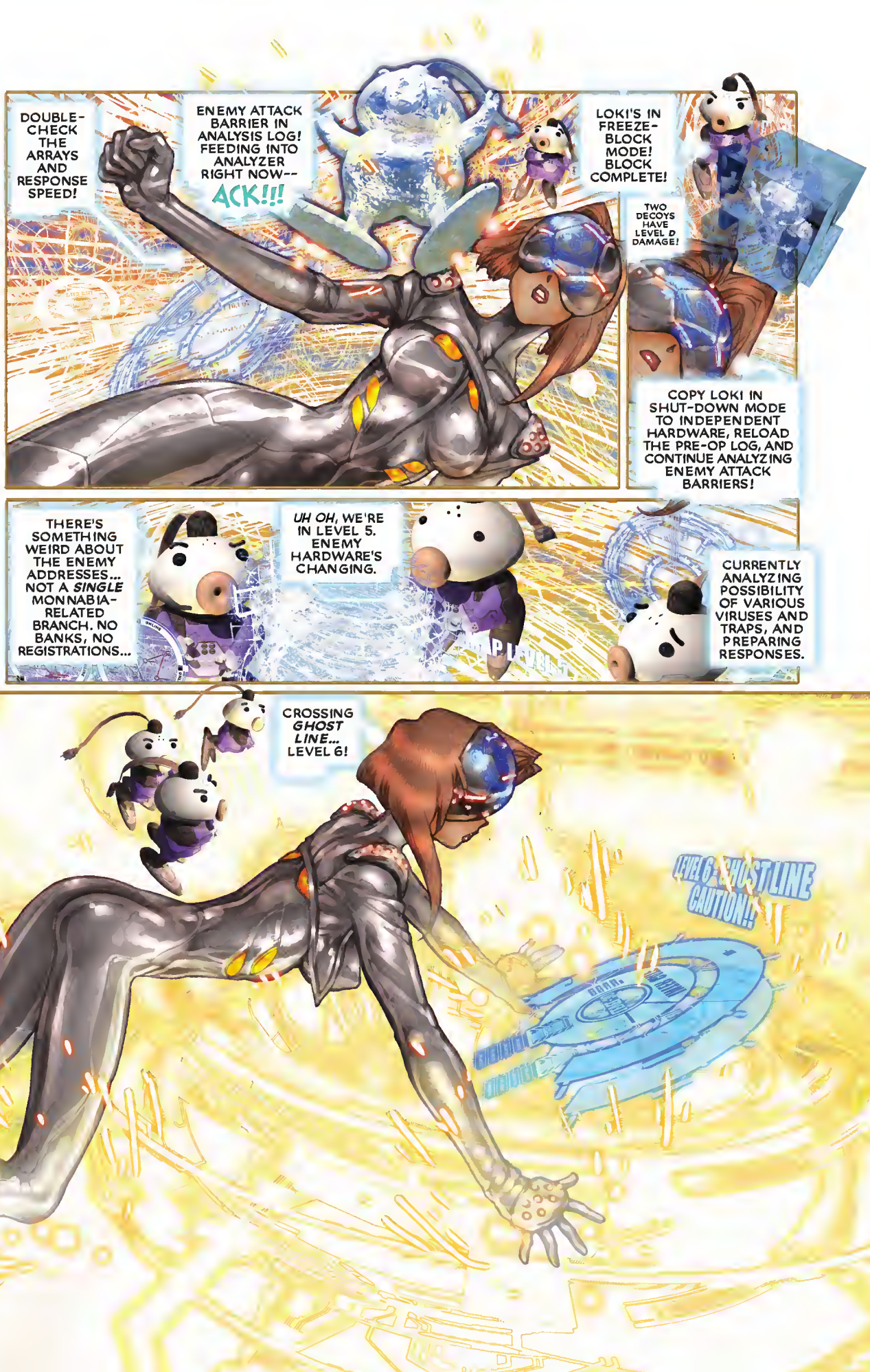

STANDING BY HERE...
F4 DECOY PASSED ACTIVATION CHECK...
RELEASE LEBRIS' BARRIERS! INJECT THE ROV VIRUS!
INJECTING VIRUS!
VIRUS
INFECTION COMPLETE. FUNCTIONAL DISABILITY WILL OCCUR IN 12 SECONDS, STARTING AT LEVEL 2.
NOW CONFIRMING PHYSICAL DISCONNECT IN PROSTHETIC BODY AND ACTIVATION OF VIRTUAL BODY SENSATION.
ESTIMATED TIME 'TIL IT HITS LEVEL 6?
24 SECS.
LEVEL MAP
SYSTEM K-19H9
CA
D.
AND SET LEVEL 5 AWARENESS FIELD!
SETTINGS COMPLETE!
STANDBY WITH D SET VIRUS ARRAY. SET QUARTERBACK TO "CINDERELLA."

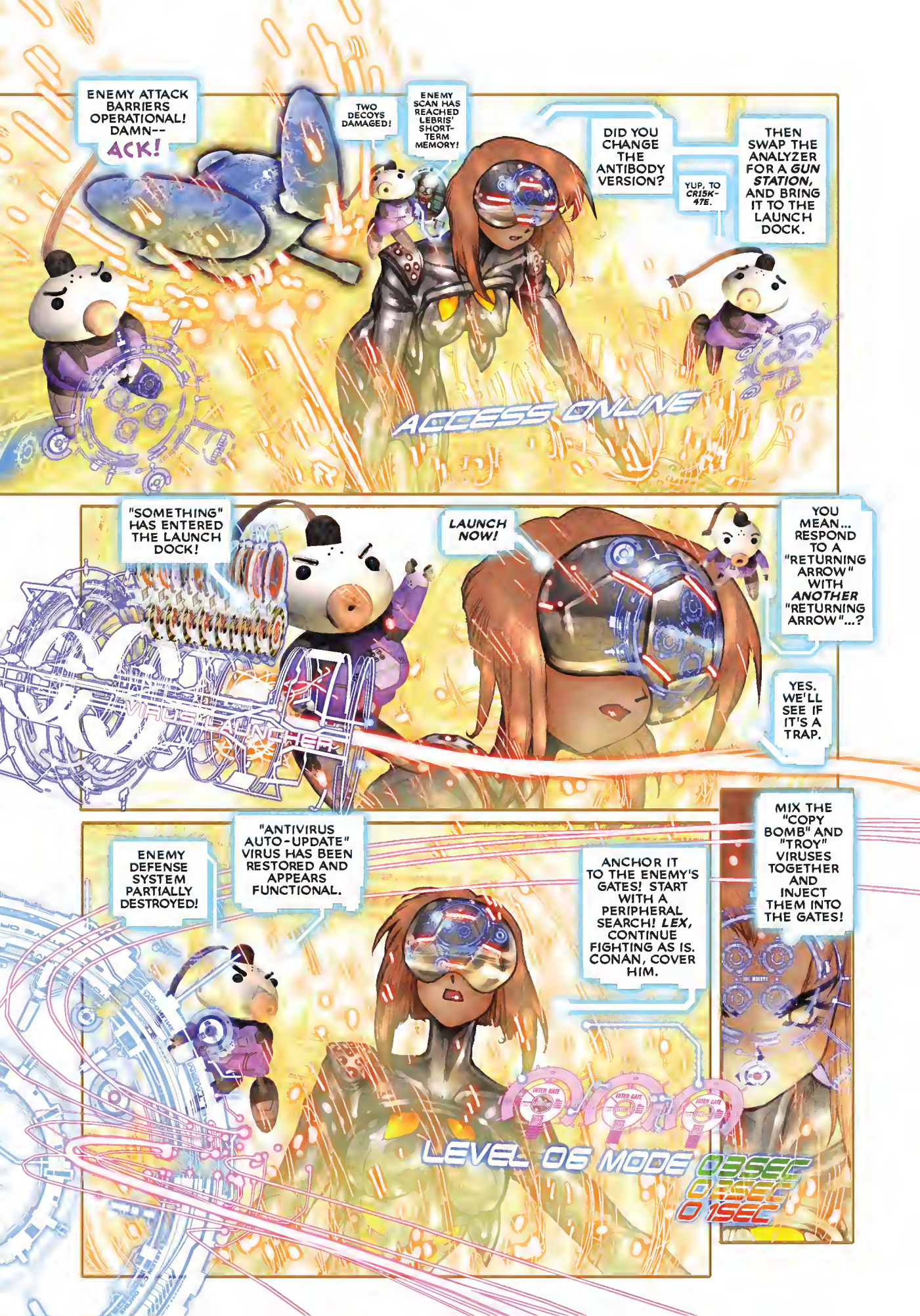

ADJUST "TRASH CAN BOMB" AND "COMPRESSION ERRORS" TO ACTIVATE WITH "CINDERELLA" ANTIBODIES AT THE OUTER LIMITS OF LEVEL 6.
SETTINGS COMPLETE!
I'M JUMPING IN THROUGH MULTIPLE LINE-OUTS ON LEBRIS. STAND BY WITH ROUTE-ARRAYS WIDE OPEN!
AYE-AYE, SAH!
ONLINE
ONLINE
PUT ALL EMERGENCY ATTACK BARRIERS ON STANDBY!
7 SECS 'TIL LEBRIS' LINE-OUTS OPEN...
6
5
4
3
2
PROTECTION LEVELS
STOCK FILE
LEVEL 1
ONLINE
1!
....
FOUR NEW LINE-OUTS... 2 SECS 'TIL ROUTE ARRAYS ARE JOINED!
OPEN LINKS!
LINK OUT ACTIVE
GATE 01
GATE 02
GATE 03
GATE 04

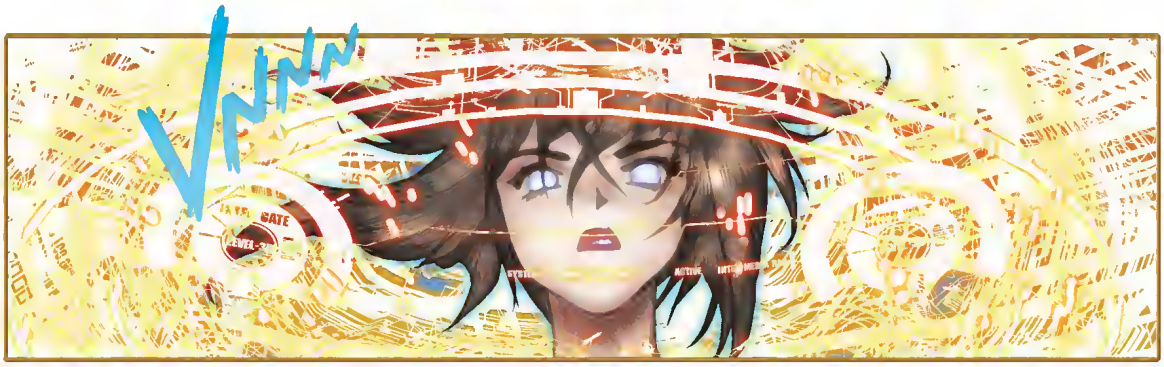

YOU'VE PASSED THE SET POINT! ENTERING SATELLITE NET VIA GAVEL'S GROUND STATIONS!
FIVE TRIP-WIRE ALARMS CLEARED.
NOW SEARCHING SUB-BRANCHES.
SHIFTING TO SATELLITE RELAYS VIA SAO PAULO AND TEL AVIV.
72 TRAPS RELEASED! STILL PROCEEDING...
THREE ROUTES HAVE MERGED INTO THE MONNABIA CABLE NETWORK.
MONNABIA CABLE NETWORK
I'VE GOT A RETURN ON THE HARDWARE ANALYSIS! IT'S EITHER THE OUTER LIMIT OF THE ENEMY'S BRAIN OR A MONOGATE-CLASS NEURO AI.
SOMETHING BOTHERS ME ABOUT MONNABIA...


HANNIBAL, TRACE THE REMAINING ROUTE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE! CHUI, YOU SUPPORT HIM!
YES, MA'AM!
"CINDERELLA" ACTIVATION PINGBACKS RECEIVED...
SEARCHING ENEMY'S ANTIBODIES...
VIRUS CINDERELLA
SPLIT UP THE "ANTIVIRUS AUTO-UPDATE" VIRUS AND RELEASE IT INTO THREE LINES!
MA'AM? THE DATABASE SAYS THAT VIRUS CAUSES A FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT WITH "CINDERELLA"...!
JUST DO IT!
WE FIRST TARGET THE PERIPHERAL E-BRAIN HARDWARE AND LONG-TERM MEMORY!
ENEMY VIRUS DETECTION! ANTIBODIES WORKING!
FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT IN INPUT GATE!
RECOVERY ACTIVITIES DETECTED!
ESTIMATE THE ENEMY'S ACTIVITY LOG BASED ON RESPONSE TIME, AND REPORT BACK!
USE SHORTEST ROUTE POSSIBLE TO ANCHOR ATTACK BARRIERS ON OTHER CONFIRMED GATEWAYS!
ENTERING LEVEL 2!
INTER GATE

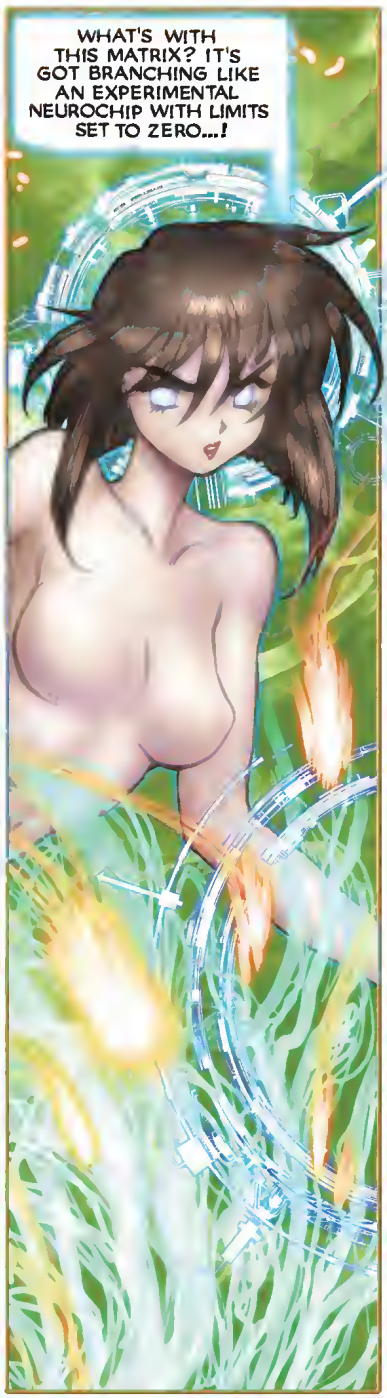
Wire lines may seem an odd concept in the e-brain era. Yet for relay equipment (and surrogate devices where physical disconnects and powering off by pulling the plug are possible), there are advantages in terms of risk management.

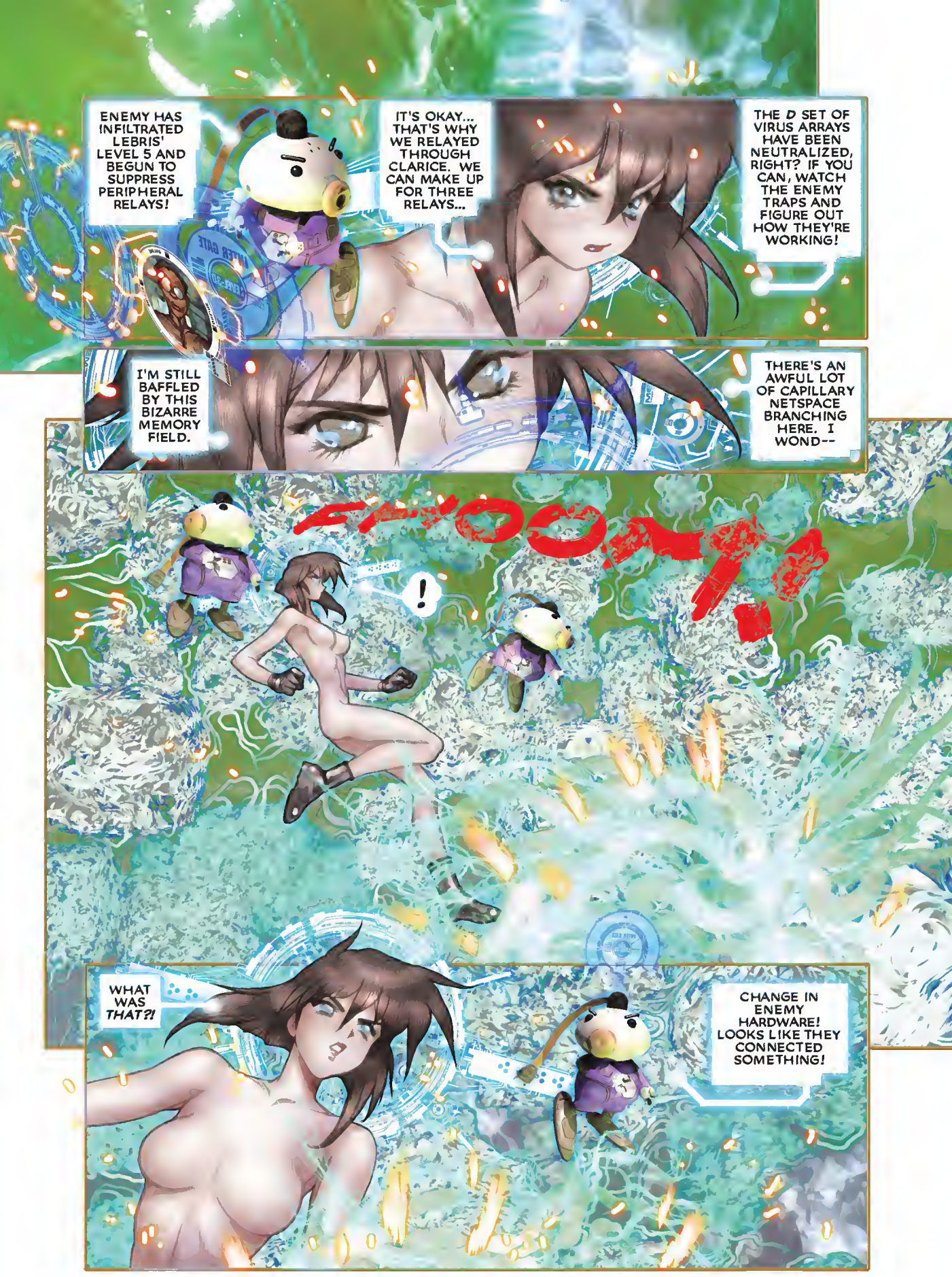

DOUBLE-CHECK THE ARRAYS AND RESPONSE SPEED!
ENEMY ATTACK BARRIER IN ANALYSIS LOG! FEEDING INTO ANALYZER RIGHT NOW--
ACK!!!
LOKI'S IN FREEZE-BLOCK MODE! BLOCK COMPLETE!
TWO DECOYS HAVE LEVEL D DAMAGE!
COPY LOKI IN SHUT-DOWN MODE TO INDEPENDENT HARDWARE, RELOAD THE PRE-OP LOG, AND CONTINUE ANALYZING ENEMY ATTACK BARRIERS!
THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT THE ENEMY ADDRESSES... NOT A SINGLE MONNABIA-RELATED BRANCH. NO BANKS, NO REGISTRATIONS...
UH OH, WE'RE IN LEVEL 5. ENEMY HARDWARE'S CHANGING.
CURRENTLY ANALYZING POSSIBILITY OF VARIOUS VIRUSES AND TRAPS, AND PREPARING RESPONSES.
CROSSING GHOST LINE... LEVEL 6!
LEVEL 6 GHOST LINE CAUTION!!


ENEMY ATTACK BARRIERS OPERATIONAL! DAMN--
ACK!
TWO DECOYS DAMAGED!
ENEMY SCAN HAS REACHED LEBRIS' SHORT-TERM MEMORY!
DID YOU CHANGE THE ANTIBODY VERSION?
YUP, TO CR15K-47E.
THEN SWAP THE ANALYZER FOR A GUN STATION, AND BRING IT TO THE LAUNCH DOCK.
ACCESS ONLINE
"SOMETHING" HAS ENTERED THE LAUNCH DOCK!
LAUNCH NOW!
YOU MEAN... RESPOND TO A "RETURNING ARROW" WITH ANOTHER "RETURNING ARROW"...?
YES. WE'LL SEE IF IT'S A TRAP.
ENEMY DEFENSE SYSTEM PARTIALLY DESTROYED!
"ANTIVIRUS AUTO-UPDATE" VIRUS HAS BEEN RESTORED AND APPEARS FUNCTIONAL.
ANCHOR IT TO THE ENEMY'S GATES! START WITH A PERIPHERAL SEARCH! LEX, CONTINUE FIGHTING AS IS. CONAN, COVER HIM.
MIX THE "COPY BOMB" AND "TROY" VIRUSES TOGETHER AND INJECT THEM INTO THE GATES!
LEVEL 06 MODE
0.3SEC
0.2SEC
0.1SEC


VNNN
GATE
LEVEL-2

LEVEL 06
CAUTION!

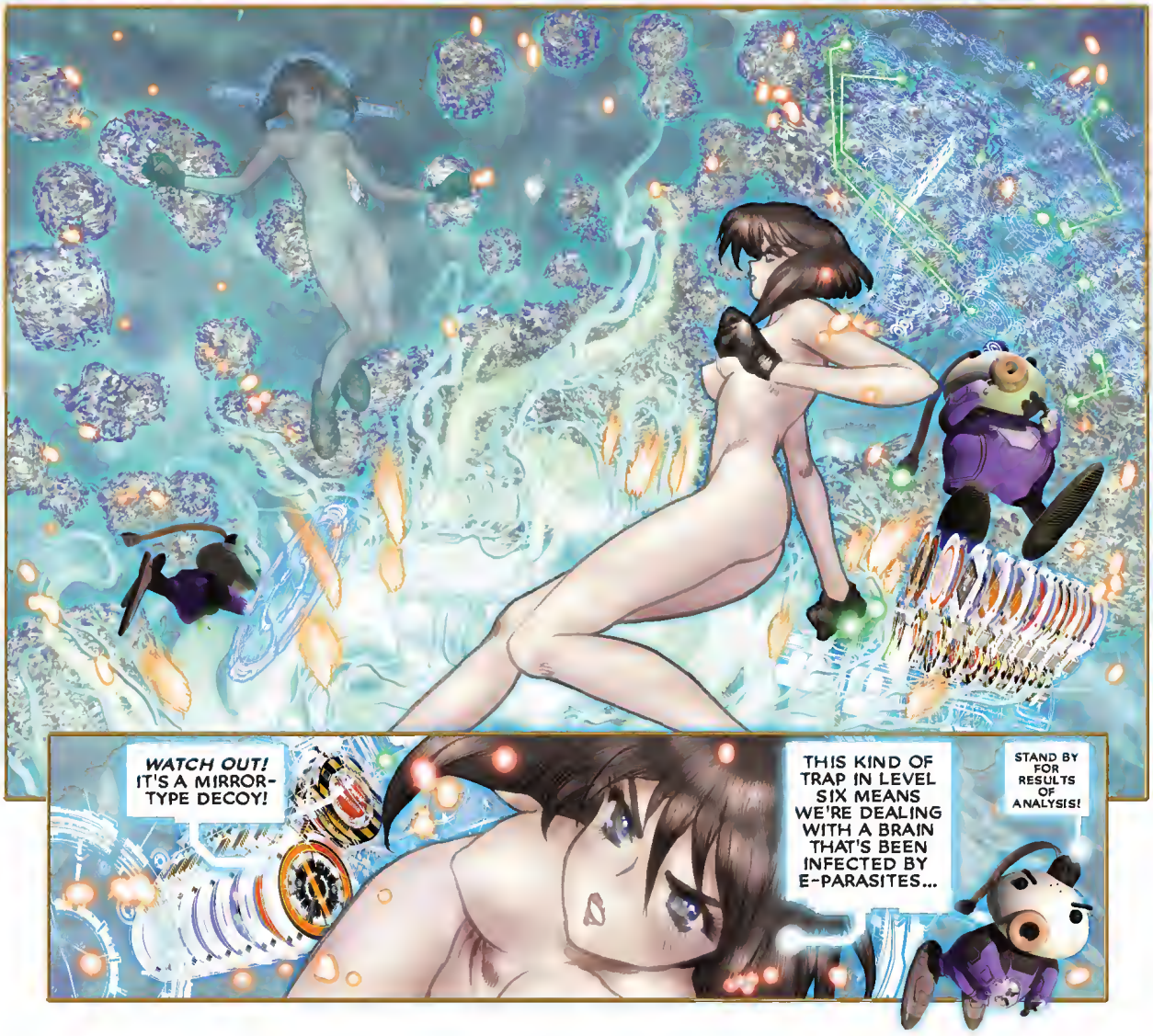

WHAT'S WITH THIS MATRIX? IT'S GOT BRANCHING LIKE AN EXPERIMENTAL NEUROCHIP WITH LIMITS SET TO ZERO...!




LAN: Local Area Network. Not a huge computer network like the Internet, but a limited e-brain space (such as one might find in a corporation or a factory).
NODE: An active connecting point or juncture in a network.

THE ENEMY BRAIN'S A SINGLE TERMINAL ON A STAR-SHAPED LAN.
MAYBE THE BODY-CONTROL PRIORITY HAS MOVED TO A FAIRLY SIMPLE SYSTEM...?
NODE QUALITY'S REALLY LOW, oink.
"OINK"...?
WHA-?
!
?!?
I'VE CRACKED THE SYS ADMIN SECTOR!

A SEGMENT OF THE ENEMY HAS RANDOMIZED AND DISAPPEARED!
A MIRROR?
ENEMY SYSTEM SUPPRESSED. NOW RECHECKING FOR MINES, ETCETERA...


WATCH OUT! IT'S A MIRROR-TYPE DECOY!
THIS KIND OF TRAP IN LEVEL SIX MEANS WE'RE DEALING WITH A BRAIN THAT'S BEEN INFECTED BY E-PARASITES...
STAND BY FOR RESULTS OF ANALYSIS!

ANTI-IMMUNE FACTORS: A somewhat confusing term, but when a "ghost" inhabits another's brain as a parasite, it deploys more than antibodies and virus checkers--it also uses viruses and gates to suppress the host's self-awareness and ability to reject foreign data. After the parasite ghost withdraws from its host, it may leave behind traces, which can cause an information immune-system deficiency.

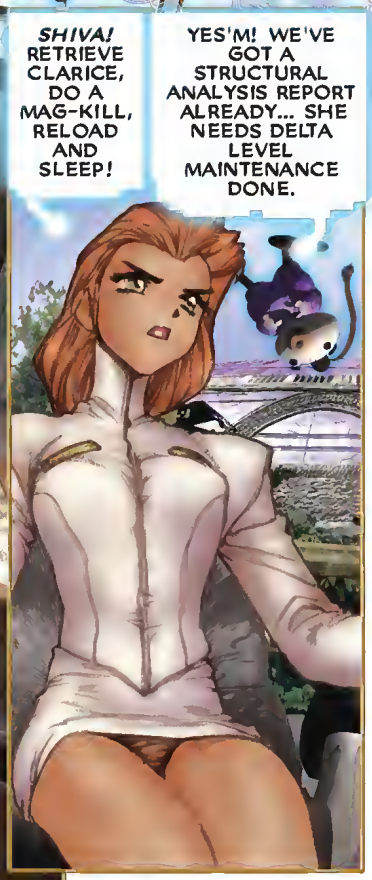
SINCE WHEN DID MONNABIA HAVE SUCH A HUGE LAN...?
WHAT TH--?!
OINK
SNRF
ORK
SNUFFLE
SQEE
OINK
OINK
ORK
ONLINE
OINK!
THESE ARE THE DONOR PIGS IN MEDITECH'S PLANT NUMBER ONE!
PROTECTION LEVEL-S
CAUTION

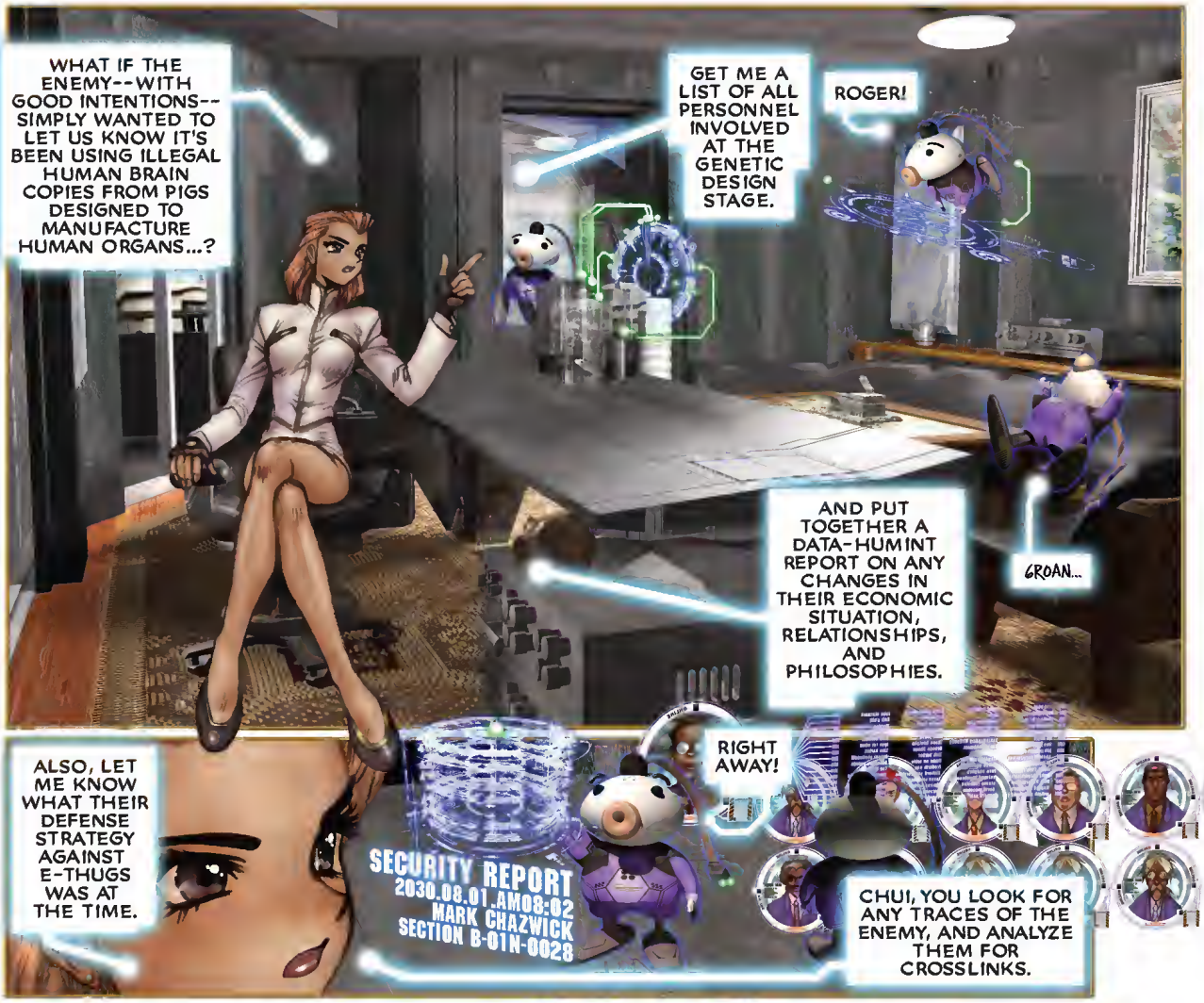
MAYBE THE PIGS HAVE JOINED FORCES TO REVOLT AGAINST MEDITECH?
YOU'VE GOT QUITE AN IMAGINATION, DANTE.
AHA!
OUR COMPANY'S PIGS AREN'T SUPPOSED TO HAVE HUMAN BRAINS... IT'S AGAINST INTERNATIONAL LAW! GET ME MANAGEMENT CHARTS AND A PIG SCAN REPORT!
SINCE WHEN HAVE WE CARED ABOUT INTERNATIONAL LAW, MISTRESS?
MAKE OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH THE PLANT THROUGH LEBRIS, AND SEARCH THE PERIPHERY OF THE PLANT FOR ANY UNUSUAL WIRES!
YES, MA'AM!
I'LL USE THE CEBOTS IN THE PLANT...
UM...I PUT TOGETHER THIS GRAPH OF ORDERS FOR EACH TYPE OF ORGAN BEING GROWN. NO HUMAN BRAINS RECORDED, WITH 100% OF SEARCH COMPLETED.
100%
THEIR NERVOUS SYSTEMS SEEM WELL DEVELOPED, BUT THEY'RE NOT FUNCTIONING AS HUMANS...
BUT THEY ARE *VERY* INTELLIGENT...
UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW THESE AREN'T HUMAN-PIGS, BUT *PIG-HUMANS*...
SHALL WE SNUFF 'EM?
WE'RE UP AGAINST A TOUGH ENEMY HERE. WONDER WHEN IT INFILTRATED MEDITECH...?
YOU THINK THE ENEMY OBTAINED INFORMATION ON MONNABIA'S FUTURE SCHEDULING FROM LEBRIS' BRAIN? WHAT KIND OF SWEEP DID THEY DO?
LOOKS LIKE THEY EXPANDED IMMEDIATELY FROM LEVEL 5 AND LIFTED ALL PERIPHERAL INFO IN ONE BEAUTIFUL SWEEP. BUT THEY LEFT LEBRIS IN GOOD CONDITION.
GOOD, GOOD.
AFTER THE TERROR ATTACK, OUR COMPANY AND MONNABIA MUST HAVE HAD AN EMERGENCY MEETING...
AH?!

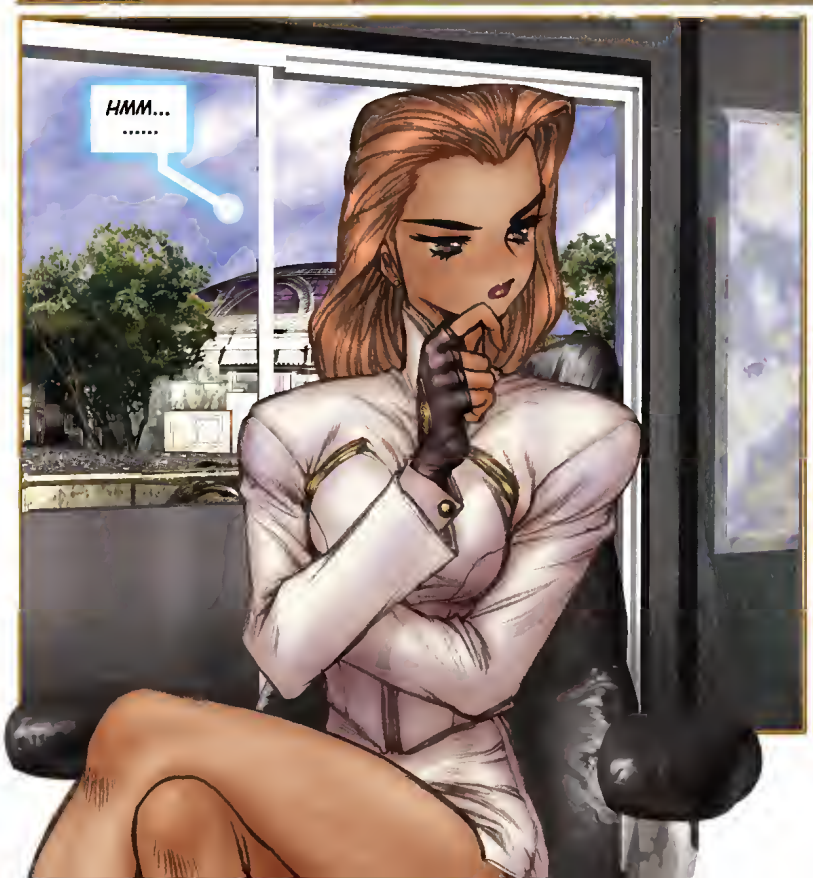
WAIT A SEC...THIS MEANS WE'RE DEALING WITH *TWO* ENEMIES!
ONE'S TURNED OUR HUMAN-PIGS INTO PIG-HUMANS AND IS USING THE BRAINS. THE OTHER'S RAIDED *THEM*... INTERESTING!
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN, THOUGH?

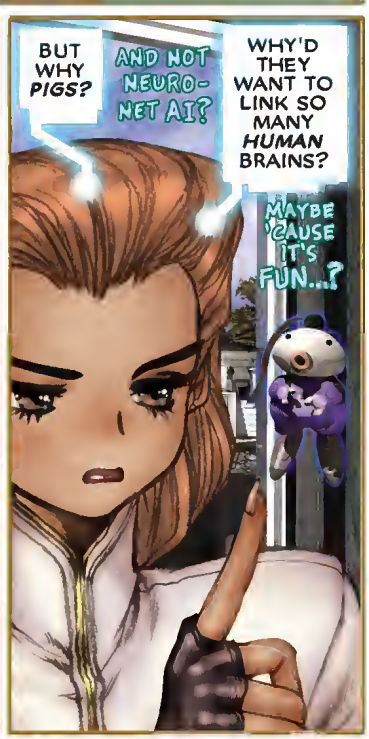
MAYBE IT'S AN INTERNAL PROBLEM...OR AN ATTEMPT TO COVER ONE UP... *HMM.*
MISTRESS? WE AUDITED THE GENE DESIGNER GROUP VIA LEBRIS, BUT FOUND NO SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT, IN EITHER LAID-OFF WORKERS OR E-BRAIN STAFF.

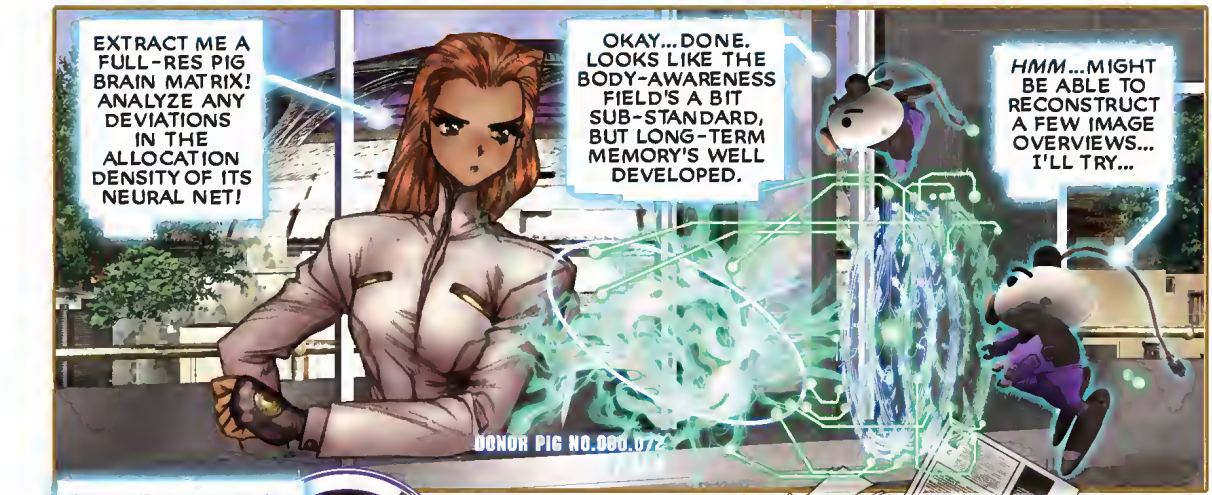
HMPH...

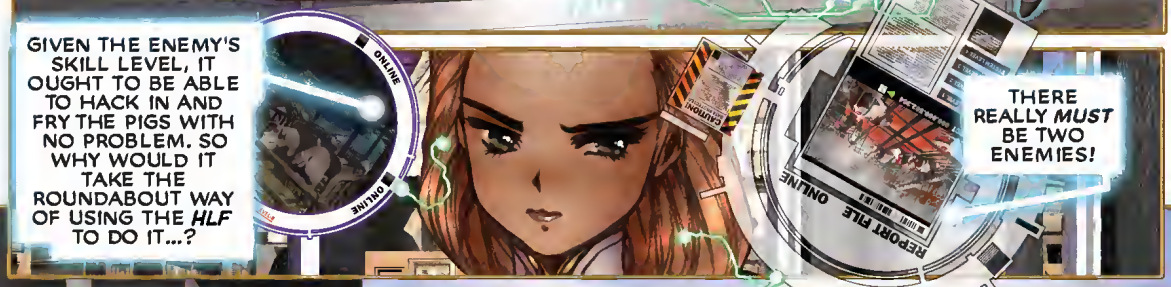

*SHIVA!* RETRIEVE CLARICE, DO A MAG-KILL, RELOAD AND SLEEP!
YES'M! WE'VE GOT A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS REPORT ALREADY... SHE NEEDS DELTA LEVEL MAINTENANCE DONE.

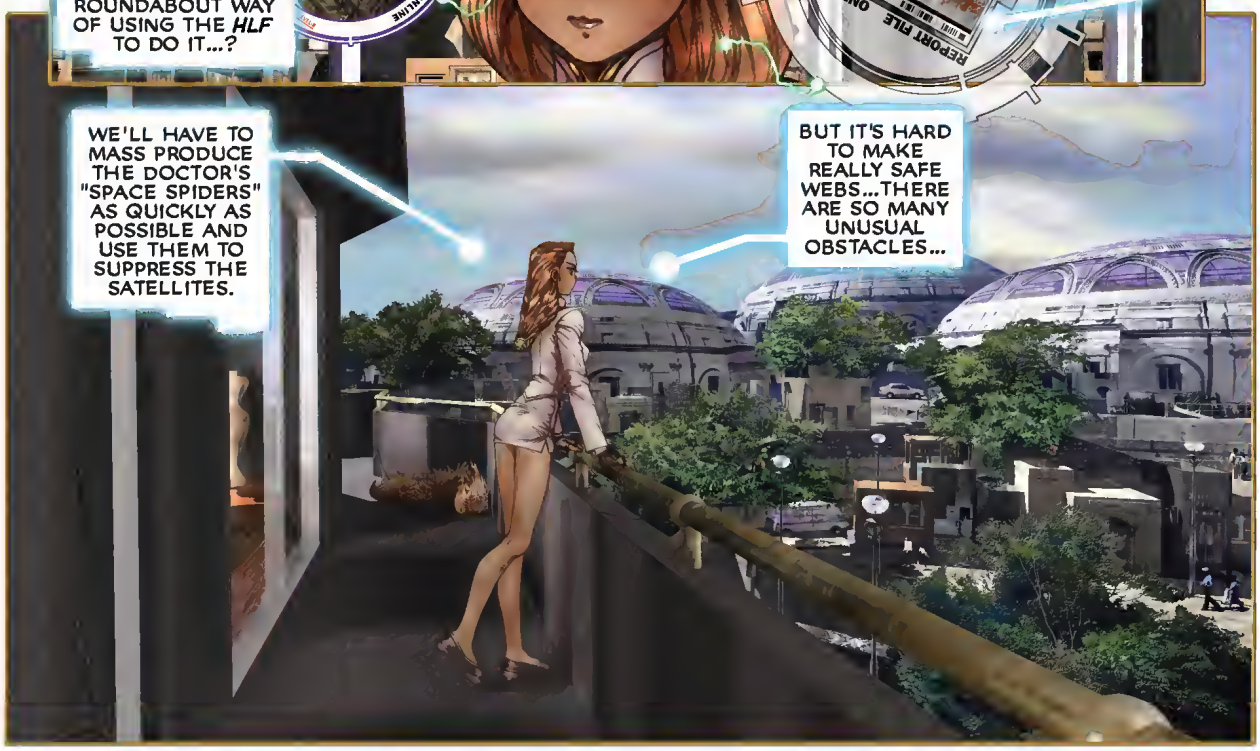

WHAT IF THE ENEMY--WITH GOOD INTENTIONS--SIMPLY WANTED TO LET US KNOW IT'S BEEN USING ILLEGAL HUMAN BRAIN COPIES FROM PIGS DESIGNED TO MANUFACTURE HUMAN ORGANS...?
GET ME A LIST OF ALL PERSONNEL INVOLVED AT THE GENETIC DESIGN STAGE.
ROGER!
AND PUT TOGETHER A DATA-HUMINT REPORT ON ANY CHANGES IN THEIR ECONOMIC SITUATION, RELATIONSHIPS, AND PHILOSOPHIES.
GROAN...
ALSO, LET ME KNOW WHAT THEIR DEFENSE STRATEGY AGAINST E-THUGS WAS AT THE TIME.
RIGHT AWAY!
SECURITY REPORT
2030.08.01 AM08:02
MARK CHAZWICK
SECTION B-01N-0028
CHUI, YOU LOOK FOR ANY TRACES OF THE ENEMY, AND ANALYZE THEM FOR CROSSLINKS.


HMM... .....


BUT WHY PIGS?
AND NOT NEURO-NET AI?
WHY'D THEY WANT TO LINK SO MANY HUMAN BRAINS?
MAYBE 'CAUSE IT'S FUN...?



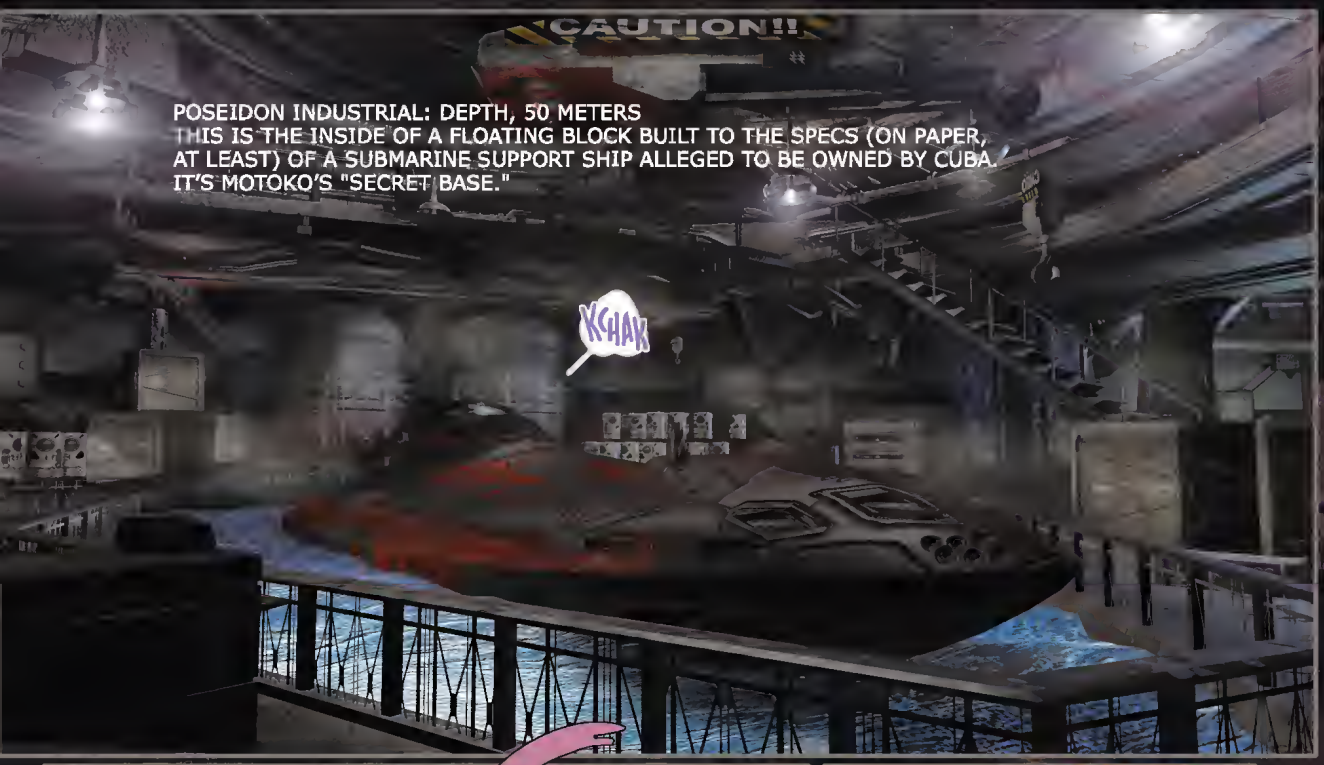



In this case, "FRY" means destroying the pig's e-brains using an attack barrier.

# 03 CIRCUIT WEAPON

2035.03.06.PM01:12


CAUTION!!
POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL: DEPTH, 50 METERS
THIS IS THE INSIDE OF A FLOATING BLOCK BUILT TO THE SPECS (ON PAPER, AT LEAST) OF A SUBMARINE SUPPORT SHIP ALLEGED TO BE OWNED BY CUBA. IT'S MOTOKO'S "SECRET BASE."
KCHAK

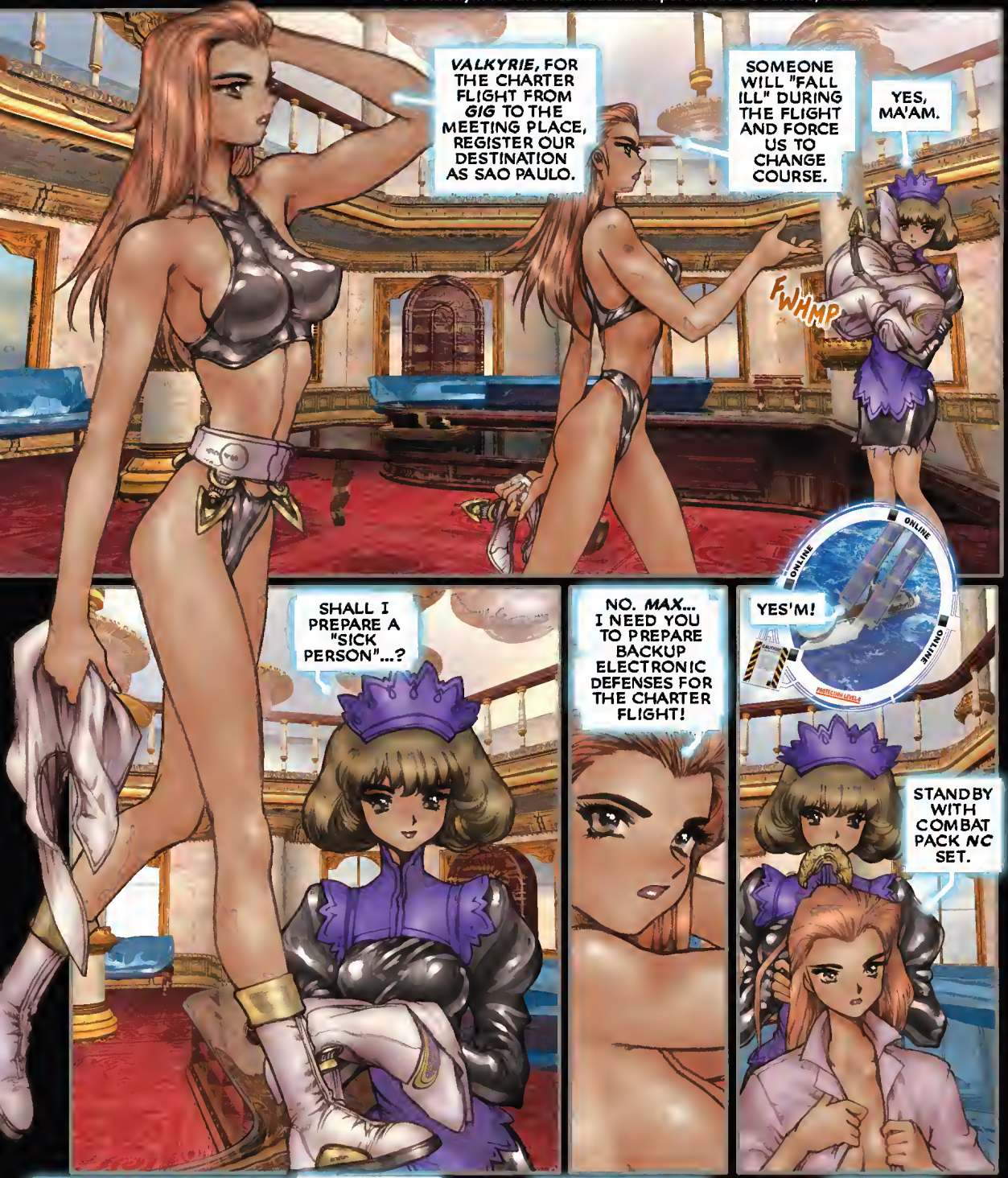
SHRANGG
KSSH

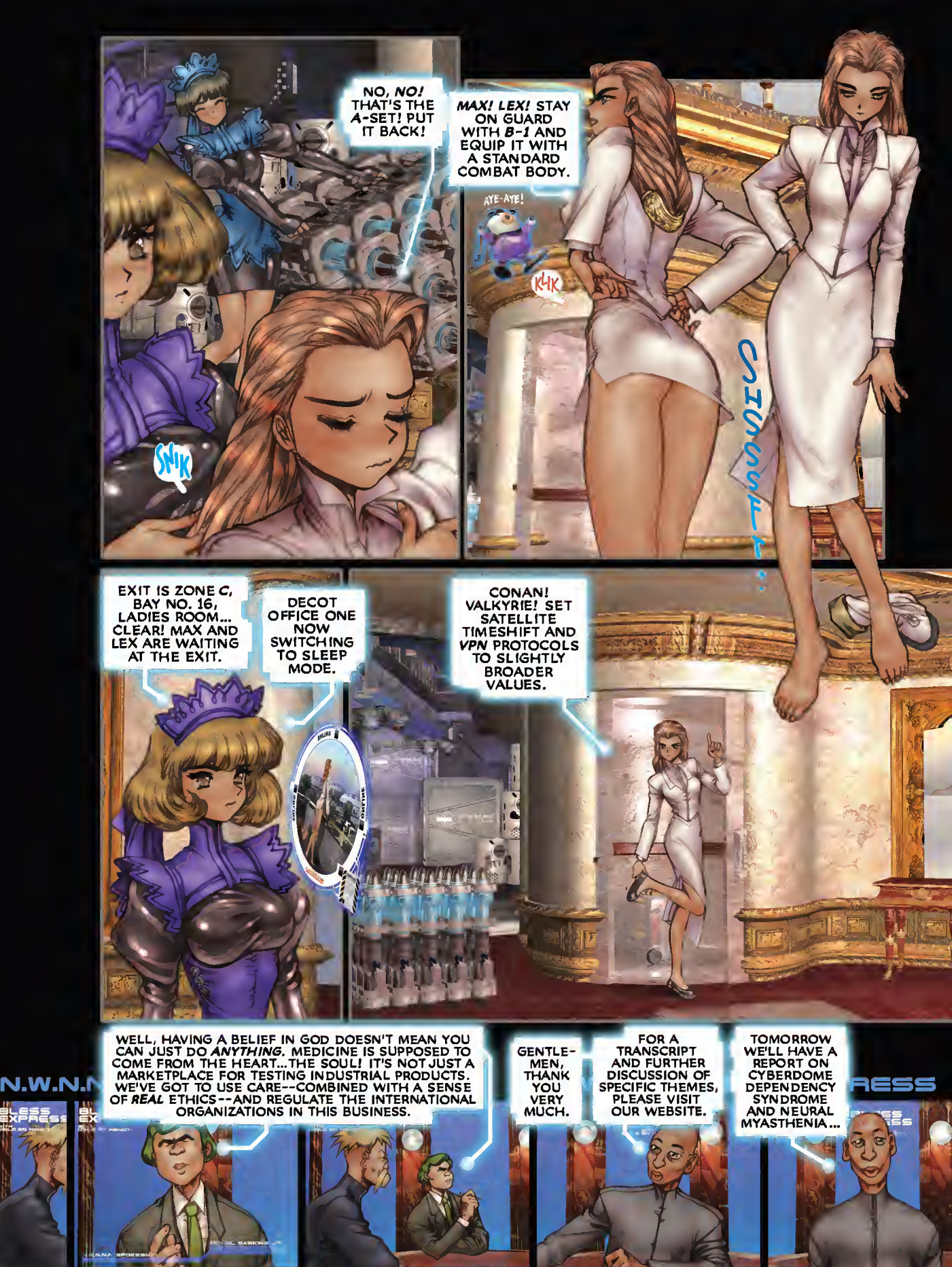
FSSH
SHHH

SO, MR. REPLIANO... YOU'RE SAYING THAT RELIGION, OR GOD, HAS TO ALLOW LIFE-SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AS IT RELATES TO BRAINS AND EMBRYOS?
IF GOD IS OMNIPOTENT, IT'S SIMPLY A LOGICAL DECISION.
BESIDES, IN MOST RELIGIONS, MEDICINE HAS AN ETHICAL AND LOGICAL BASIS--
NO! I SAY WE SHOULD ABIDE BY THE PRINCIPLES OF NATURE.
E-BRAINS, PROSTHETIC BODIES, AND ORGAN BANKS ARE ALL BLASPHEMOUS!
SO THE DYING SHOULD JUST GO AHEAD AND DIE...?
BLESS EXPRESS
POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL

Note: Like a fish's gills, Motoko's hair breathes in oxygen underwater. It can expand and contract, and it has air passages, so it's very light, compact, and easy to carry. Using optical camouflage principles, its color can also be varied, to a certain degree.

**GIG:** Acronym for the International Airport in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.

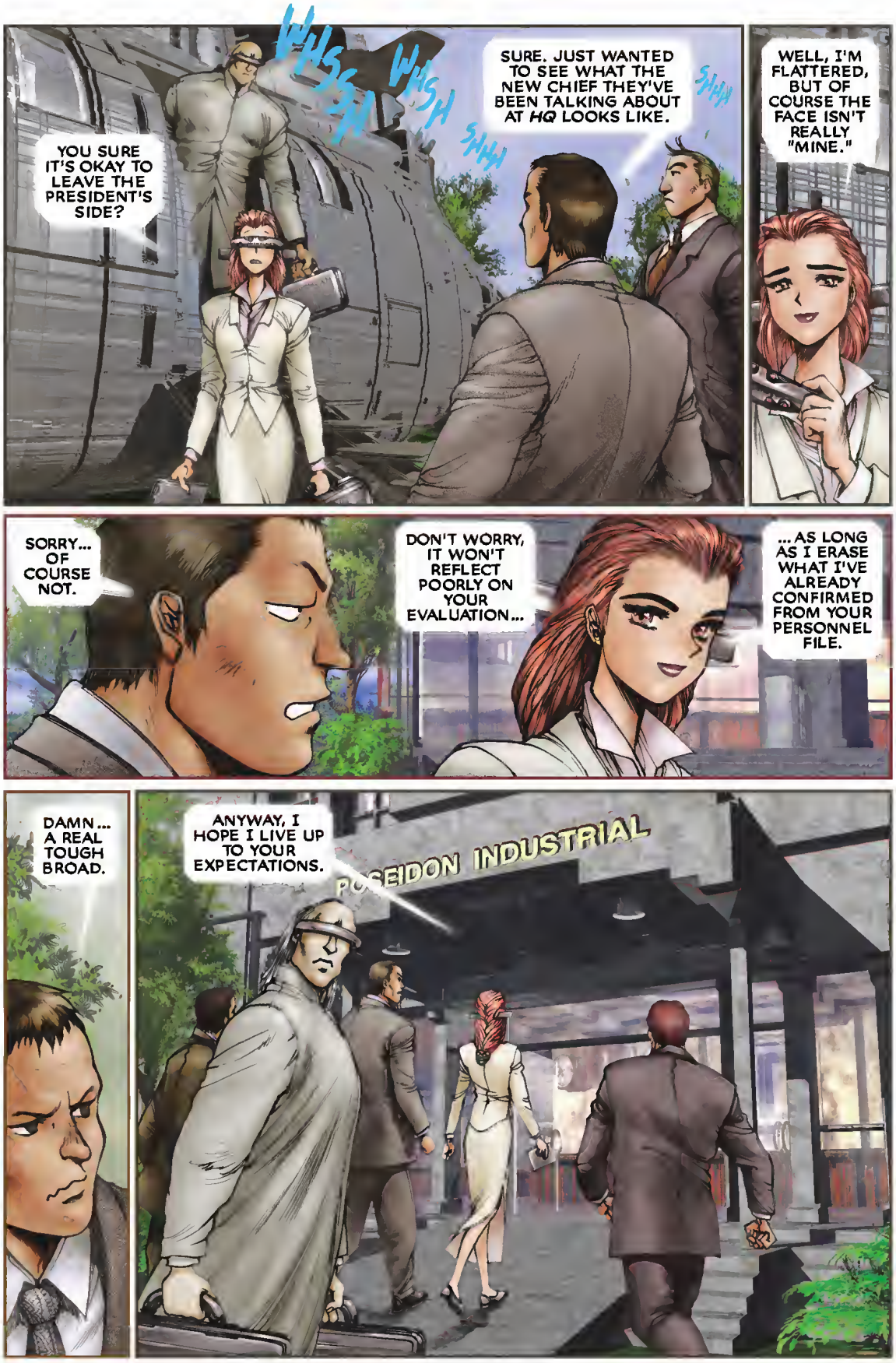


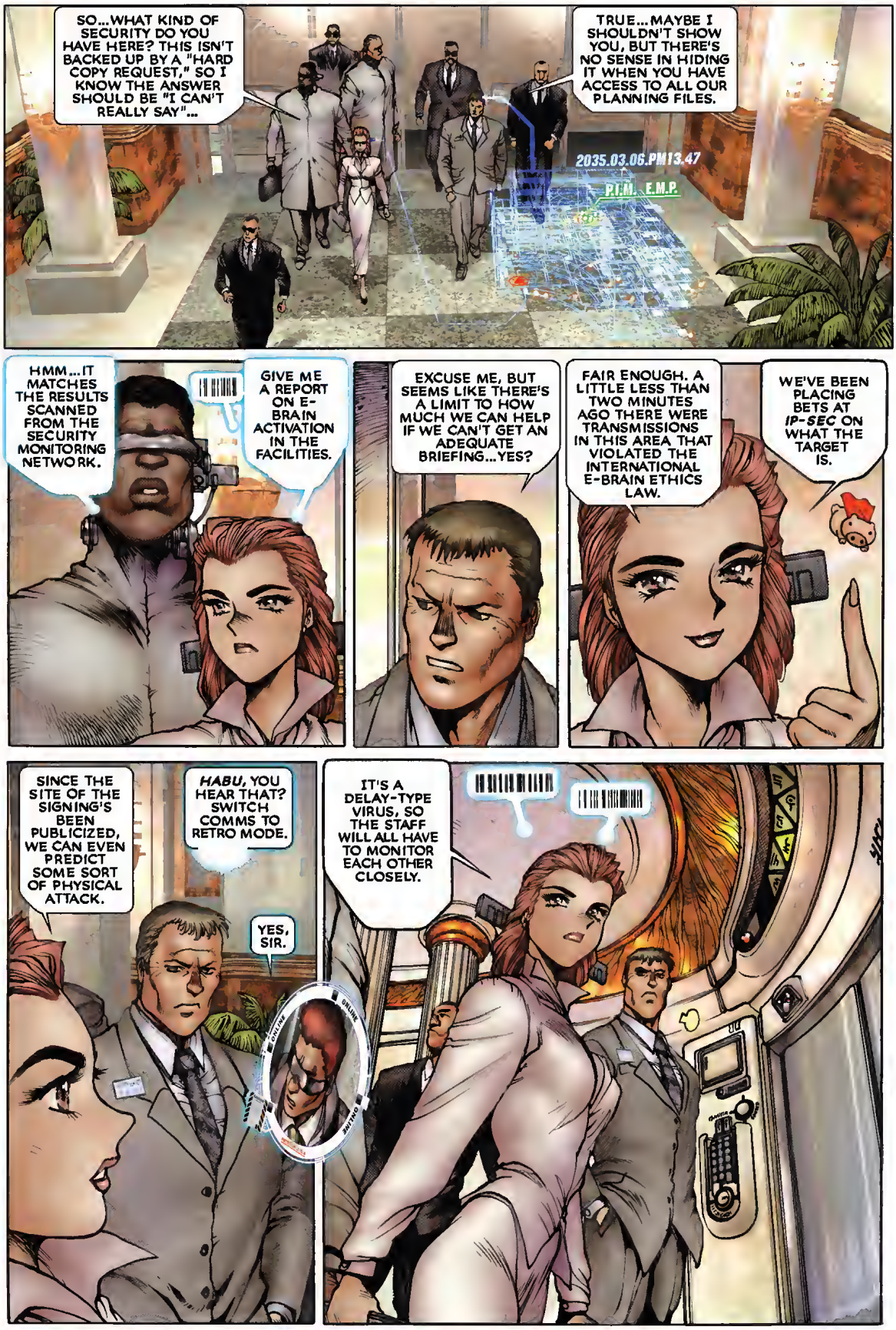


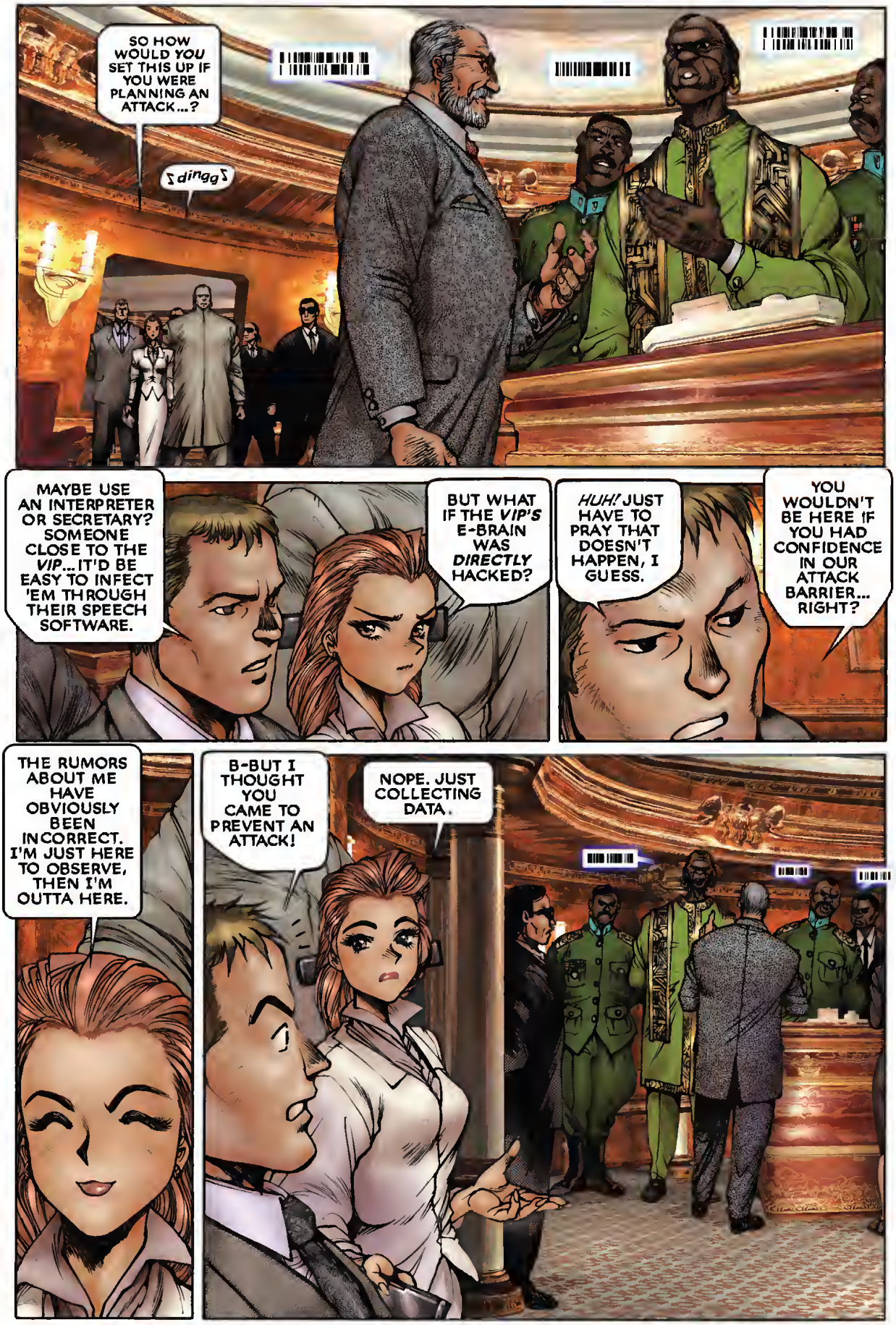

I've always thought that the transforming clothes shown in manga and anime over the years look fake. I've never seen it, but there apparently is already a dress made with a concept like that of Motoko's. Optical camouflage is common in her world, so it makes sense that there would be clothes that could change pattern, or have exceptional elasticity, or even shape-memory functions, right? After all, Motoko never knows when she's going to have to fight someone or run for it, so these are highly appreciated features. Now, don't tell me she doesn't have to be wearing a micro-mini, and that her dress could always be much longer and be "highly elastic" instead...!

WELL, THAT WAS A FRUITFUL MEETING. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN AT THE GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY.
SIR, WE'VE SCHEDULED THE SIGNING WITH EAST MONNABIA'S UNDERSECRETARY OF COMMERCE IN THE "PINE ROOM" FIVE MINUTES FROM NOW.
THIS INVOLVES AN APOLOGY AND A COMMITMENT TO REBUILD AFTER THE MEDITECH ATTACK, RIGHT?
HMM?
AN *EXAMINER* IS COMING HERE?!
AN UNSCHEDULED VISIT, AT A TIME LIKE THIS? WHAT'S GOING ON?
THERE WASN'T ANY EXPLANATION. I'LL GO MEET THEM.
YOU WANT ME TO STALL...?
NO, I'LL GO.
OVERSEE SECURITY UNTIL I COME BACK! I'LL TAKE FOUR MEN WITH ME.

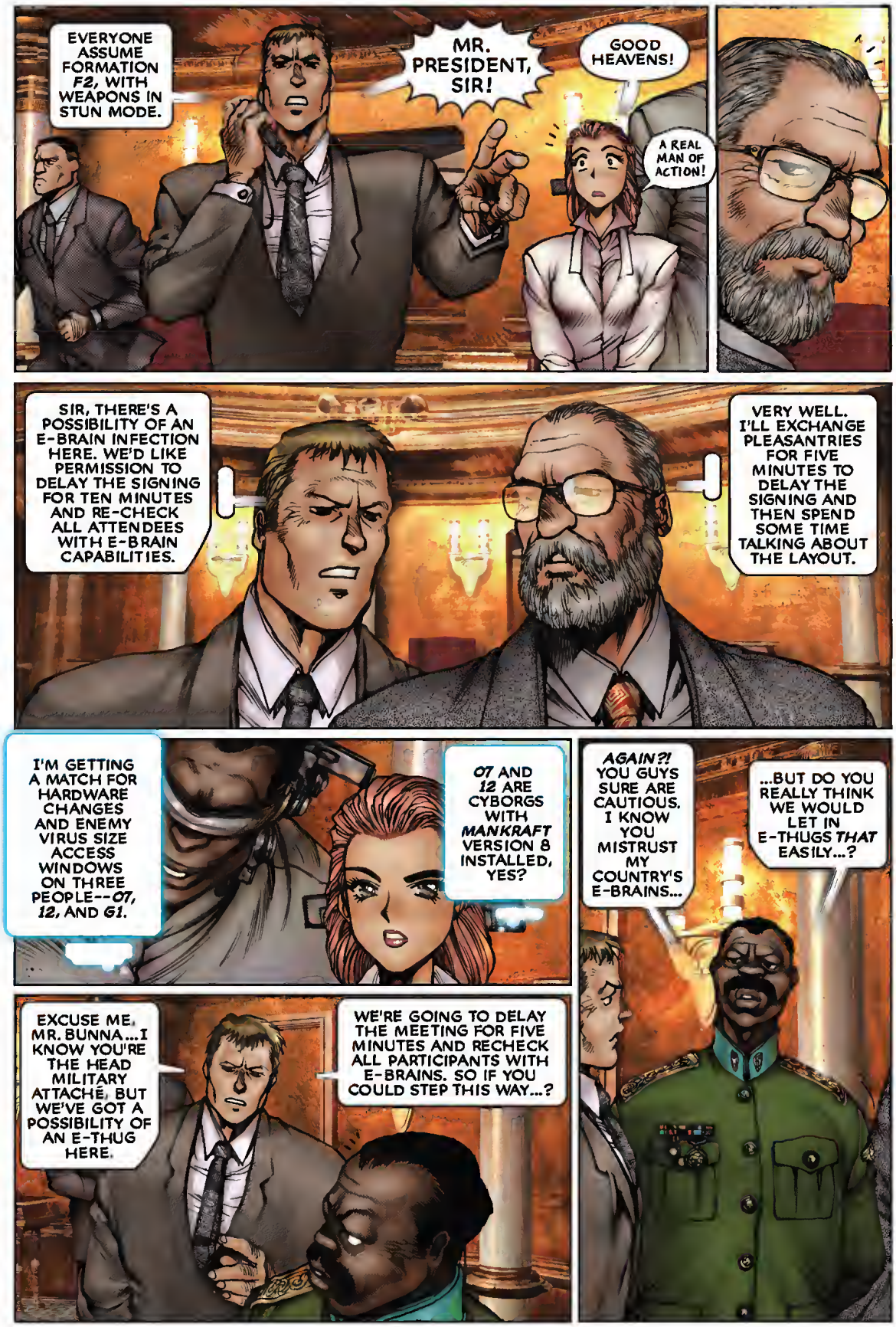
WHUP
WHUP
WHUP
WHUP
MARUYAMA! GET ME CONFIRMATION FROM *HQ* WITH *P4!* ON THE DOUBLE!
YES, SIR!
WHUP
WHUP
WHSSH
WHSSH
THE PLEASURE'S MINE. AND WHAT A SURPRISE TO BE MET PERSONALLY BY *YOU*, MR. LEE--CHIEF OF SECURITY.
WHSSH
WHSSH
VCR
VCR-505
F213130-85
BELWITS
1997.4.27.
WHTT
WHTT
WHTT
*MOTOKO ARAMAKI... WHAT A SURPRISE TO SEE *YOU* HERE...*


YOU SURE IT'S OKAY TO LEAVE THE PRESIDENT'S SIDE?
WHSSH
WHSH
SHHH
SHHH
SURE. JUST WANTED TO SEE WHAT THE NEW CHIEF THEY'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT AT HQ LOOKS LIKE.
WELL, I'M FLATTERED, BUT OF COURSE THE FACE ISN'T REALLY "MINE."
SORRY... OF COURSE NOT.
DON'T WORRY, IT WON'T REFLECT POORLY ON YOUR EVALUATION...
...AS LONG AS I ERASE WHAT I'VE ALREADY CONFIRMED FROM YOUR PERSONNEL FILE.
DAMN... A REAL TOUGH BROAD.
ANYWAY, I HOPE I LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS.
POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL


SO...WHAT KIND OF SECURITY DO YOU HAVE HERE? THIS ISN'T BACKED UP BY A "HARD COPY REQUEST," SO I KNOW THE ANSWER SHOULD BE "I CAN'T REALLY SAY"...
TRUE...MAYBE I SHOULDN'T SHOW YOU, BUT THERE'S NO SENSE IN HIDING IT WHEN YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ALL OUR PLANNING FILES.
2035.03.06.PM13.47
P.I.M. E.M.P.
HMM...IT MATCHES THE RESULTS SCANNED FROM THE SECURITY MONITORING NETWORK.
GIVE ME A REPORT ON E-BRAIN ACTIVATION IN THE FACILITIES.
EXCUSE ME, BUT SEEMS LIKE THERE'S A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH WE CAN HELP IF WE CAN'T GET AN ADEQUATE BRIEFING...YES?
FAIR ENOUGH. A LITTLE LESS THAN TWO MINUTES AGO THERE WERE TRANSMISSIONS IN THIS AREA THAT VIOLATED THE INTERNATIONAL E-BRAIN ETHICS LAW.
WE'VE BEEN PLACING BETS AT *IP-SEC* ON WHAT THE TARGET IS.
SINCE THE SITE OF THE SIGNING'S BEEN PUBLICIZED, WE CAN EVEN PREDICT SOME SORT OF PHYSICAL ATTACK.
*HABU*, YOU HEAR THAT? SWITCH COMMS TO RETRO MODE.
YES, SIR.
ONLINE
IT'S A DELAY-TYPE VIRUS, SO THE STAFF WILL ALL HAVE TO MONITOR EACH OTHER CLOSELY.




Simply scrambling the interpreting could create an interesting disruption. In this case, however, every person's capable of interpreting and they're constantly checking what others are saying, so scrambling one person's speech wouldn't affect the entire meeting. The building's heavily guarded, so just tossing a bomb isn't going to work, either. The only way to disrupt a meeting like this is to plant a saboteur on the inside. Beyond the actual targets, the virus in question here creates lots of collateral casualties on the periphery.



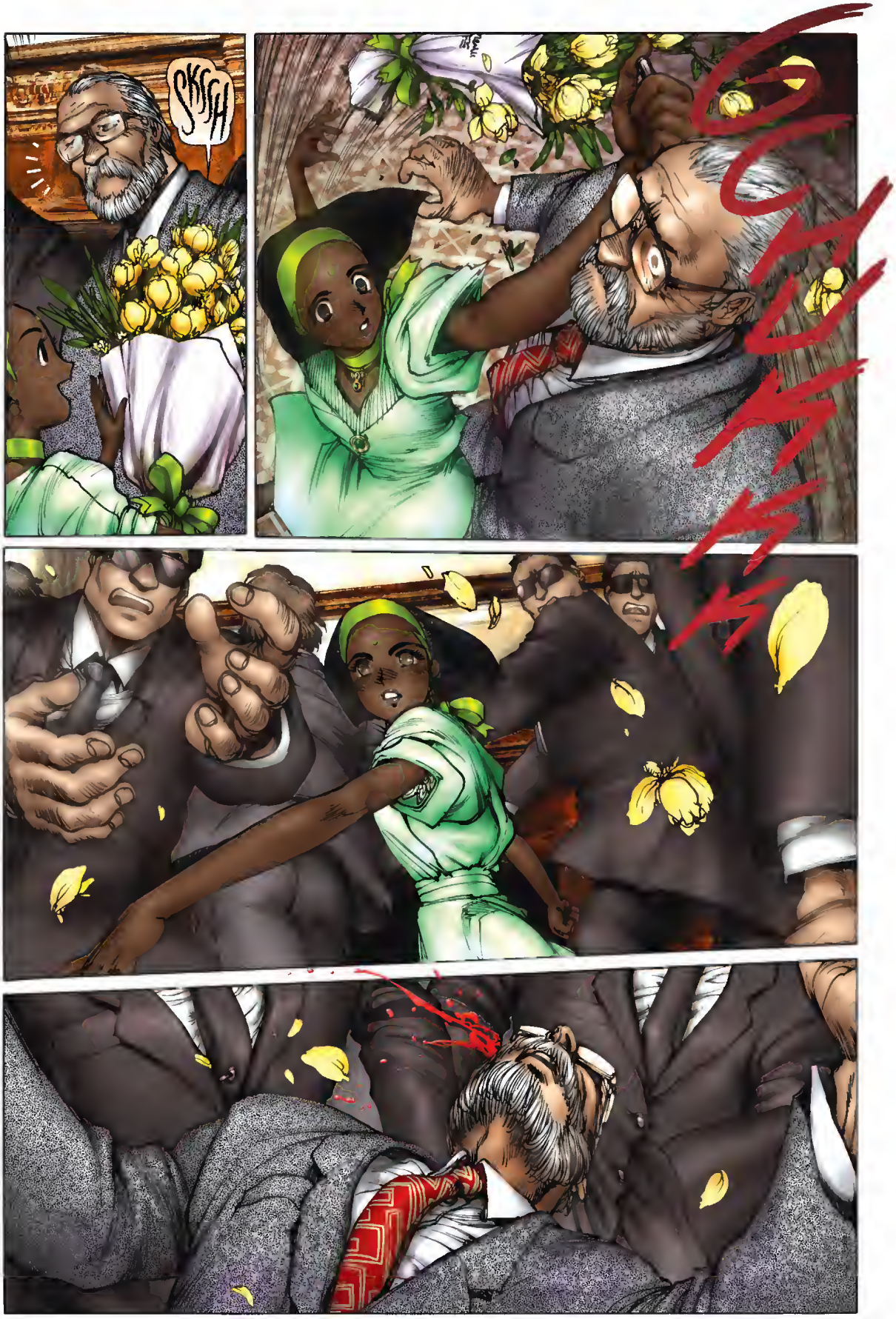

**MANKRAFT V8:** This famous brand of combat software emphasizes martial arts using simple weapons such as knives, sticks, etc. In this fictional world U.S. army cyborgs officially use it, and apparently the East Monnabia SP do, too. Version 8 onward supports grenade tossing, but there have been an increasing number of physical problems with finger and arm-joint hyperextensions.

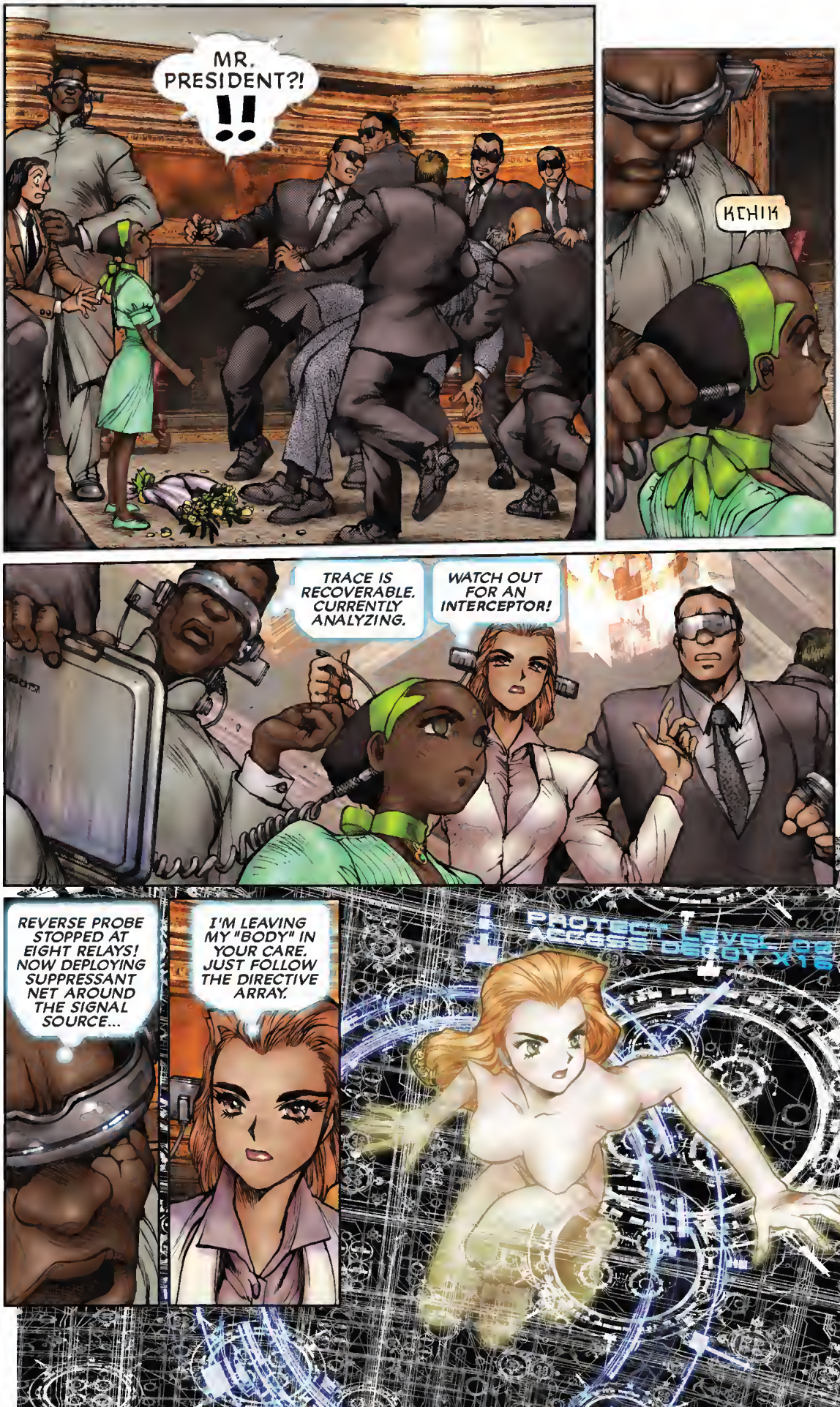
WHOOSH
THWAK
!
?!
THAP
OKAY...
FWAP

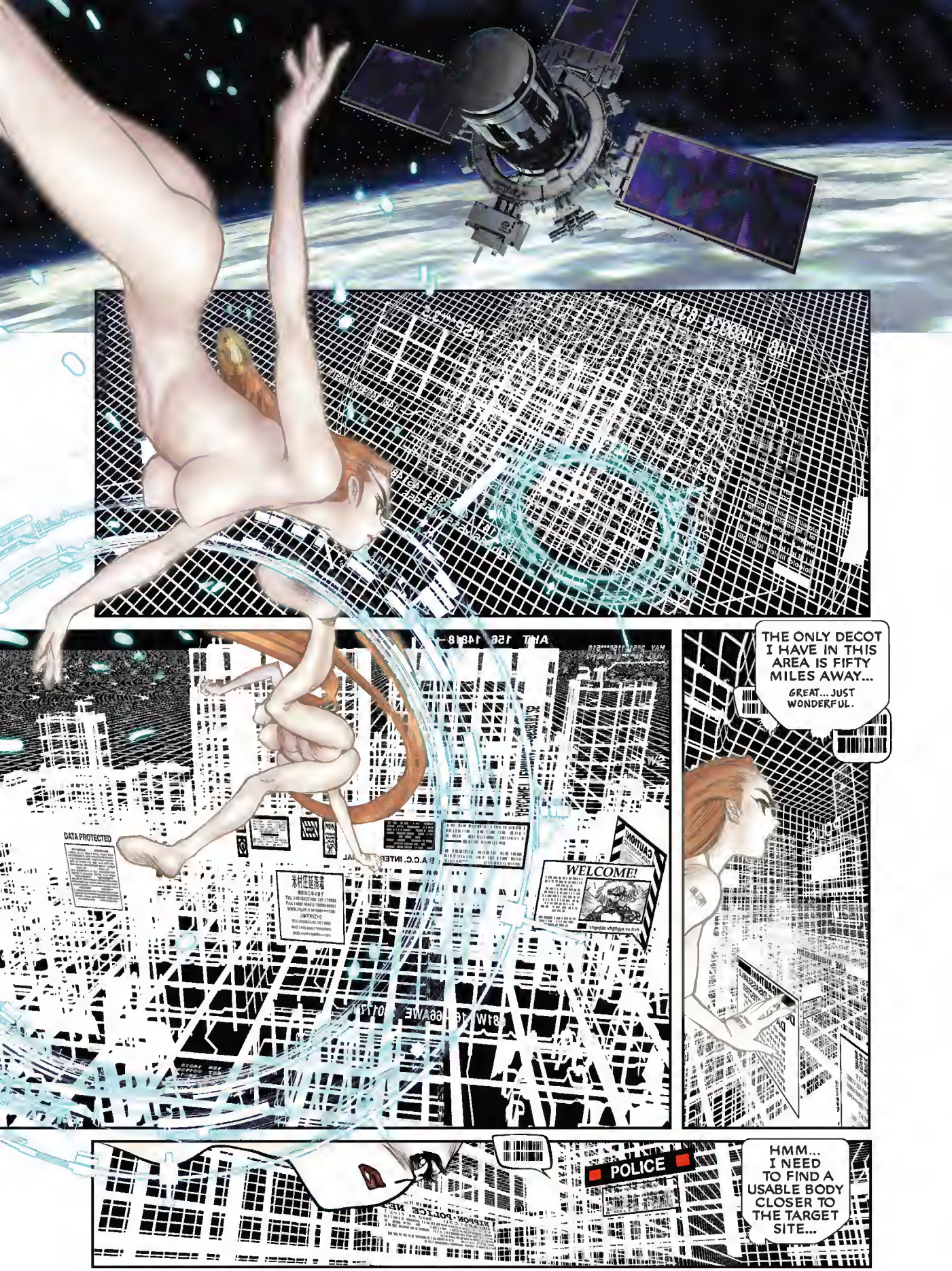
FWHDD
HABU! THE PRESIDENT!
ON IT!!
I...I CAN'T-- STOP?!
SHKK
SUPPRESS, BLOCK, THEN STAND BY. NOW!!

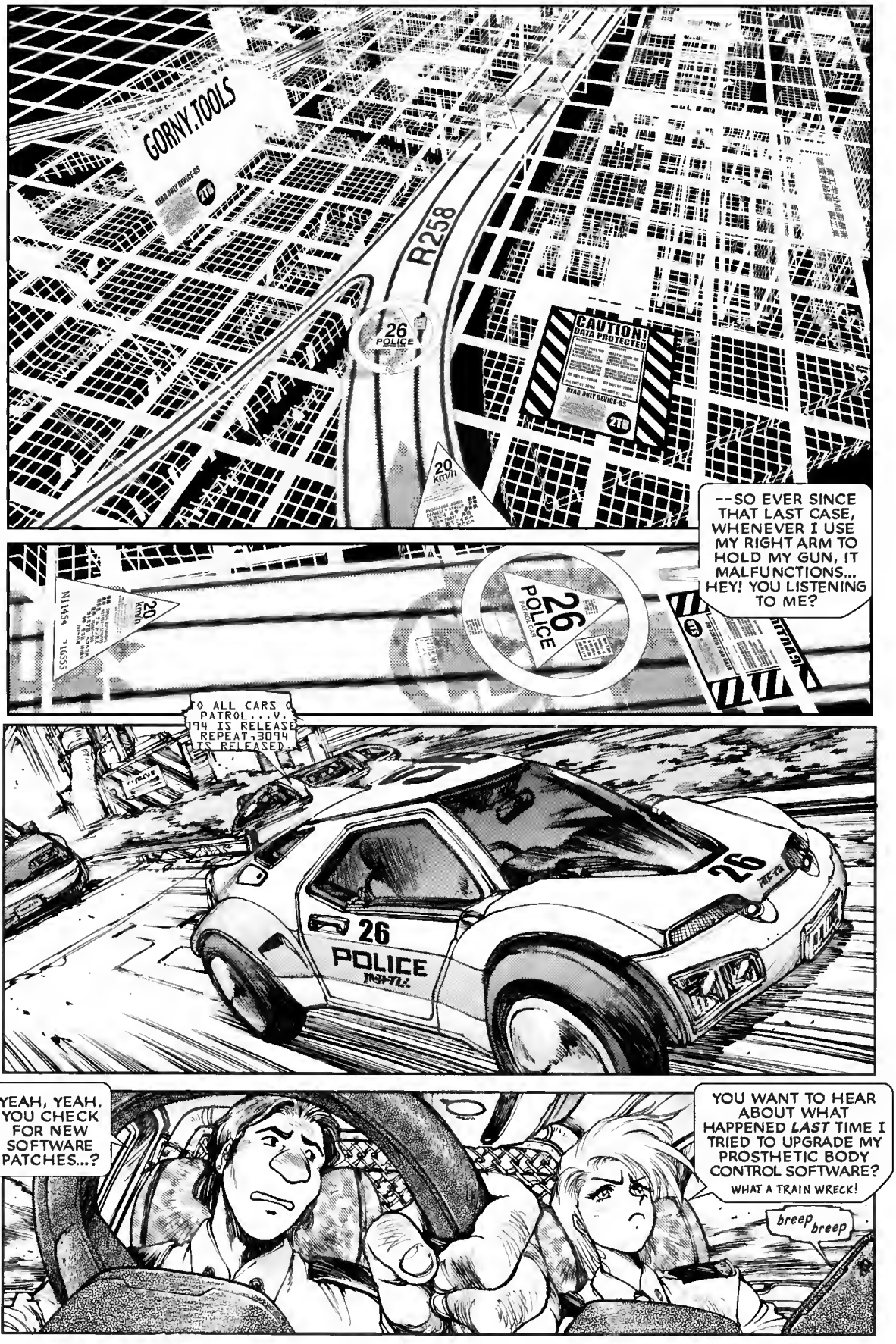
WHO
HNNGH!
KSHH
OVER HERE!
VHMMM GSHAK
breep
!!

THDD
THDD
THDD
LET HIM DREAM! I WANT EVERYONE BACKING EACH OTHER UP IN YOUR ASSIGNED TWO-MAN CELLS! RICK, YOU STAND BY IN THE SIGNING ROOM! JIM, CALL IN THE SPECIALISTS!
HUH?! STAND BY IN HERE?!
JUST DO IT, DAMN IT!


SKSSH
CHUNK

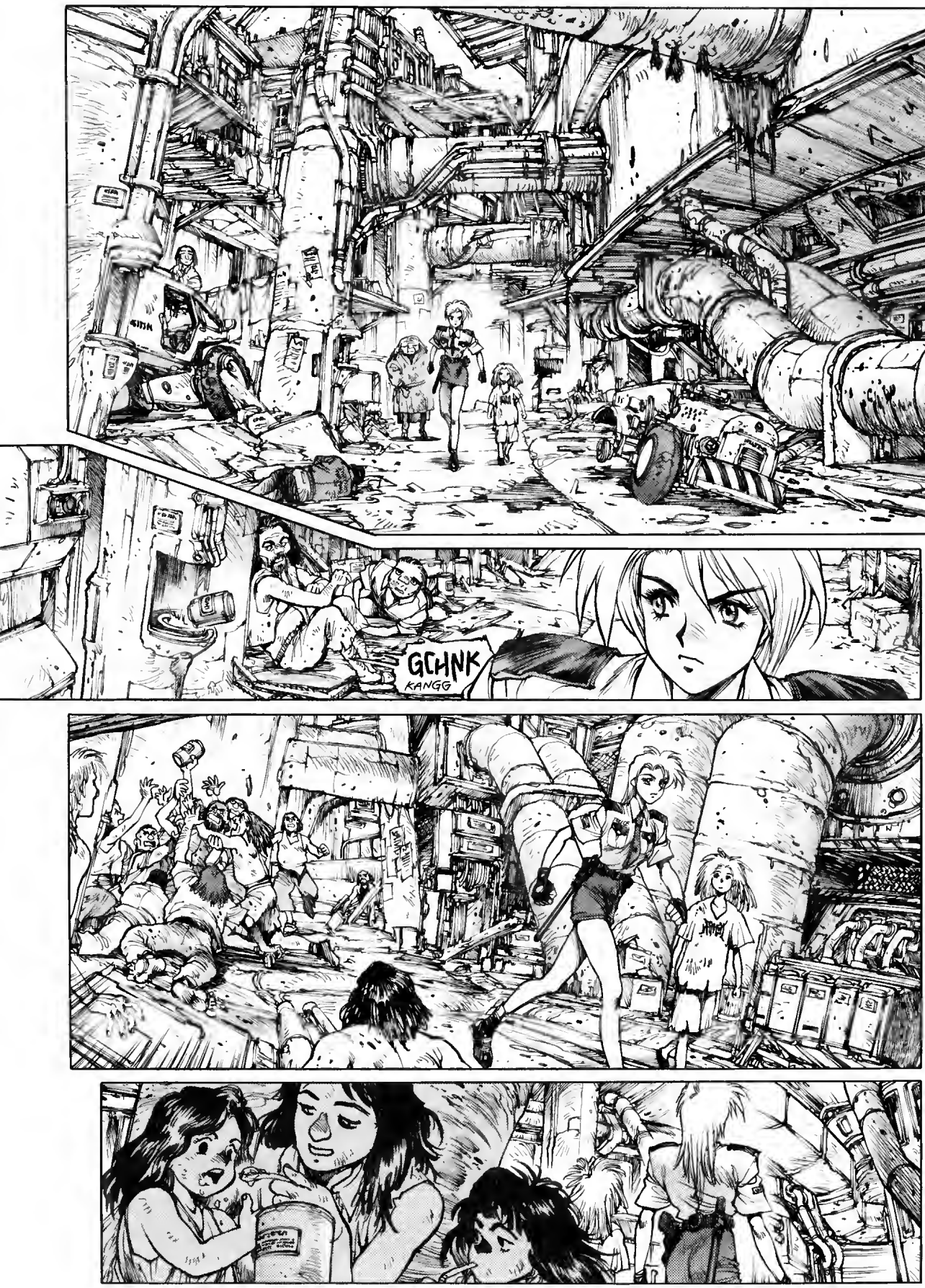

MR. PRESIDENT?!
!!
KCHIK
TRACE IS RECOVERABLE. CURRENTLY ANALYZING.
WATCH OUT FOR AN INTERCEPTOR!
REVERSE PROBE STOPPED AT EIGHT RELAYS! NOW DEPLOYING SUPPRESSANT NET AROUND THE SIGNAL SOURCE...
I'M LEAVING MY "BODY" IN YOUR CARE. JUST FOLLOW THE DIRECTIVE ARRAY.
PROTECT LEVEL 08
ACCESS DENY X16


DATA PROTECTED
WELCOME!
CAUTION
THE ONLY DECOT I HAVE IN THIS AREA IS FIFTY MILES AWAY...
GREAT... JUST WONDERFUL.
POLICE
HMM... I NEED TO FIND A USABLE BODY CLOSER TO THE TARGET SITE...


GORNY TOOLS
READ ONLY DEVICE-65
R258
26 POLICE
CAUTION DATA PROTECTED
READ ONLY DEVICE-65
20 km/h
--SO EVER SINCE THAT LAST CASE, WHENEVER I USE MY RIGHT ARM TO HOLD MY GUN, IT MALFUNCTIONS... HEY! YOU LISTENING TO ME?
20 km/h
26 POLICE PATROL CAR
TO ALL CARS ○ PATROL...V. 094 IS RELEASE REPEAT,3094 IS RELEASED...
26
POLICE
YEAH, YEAH, YOU CHECK FOR NEW SOFTWARE PATCHES...?
YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED *LAST* TIME I TRIED TO UPGRADE MY PROSTHETIC BODY CONTROL SOFTWARE?
WHAT A TRAIN WRECK!
breep breep

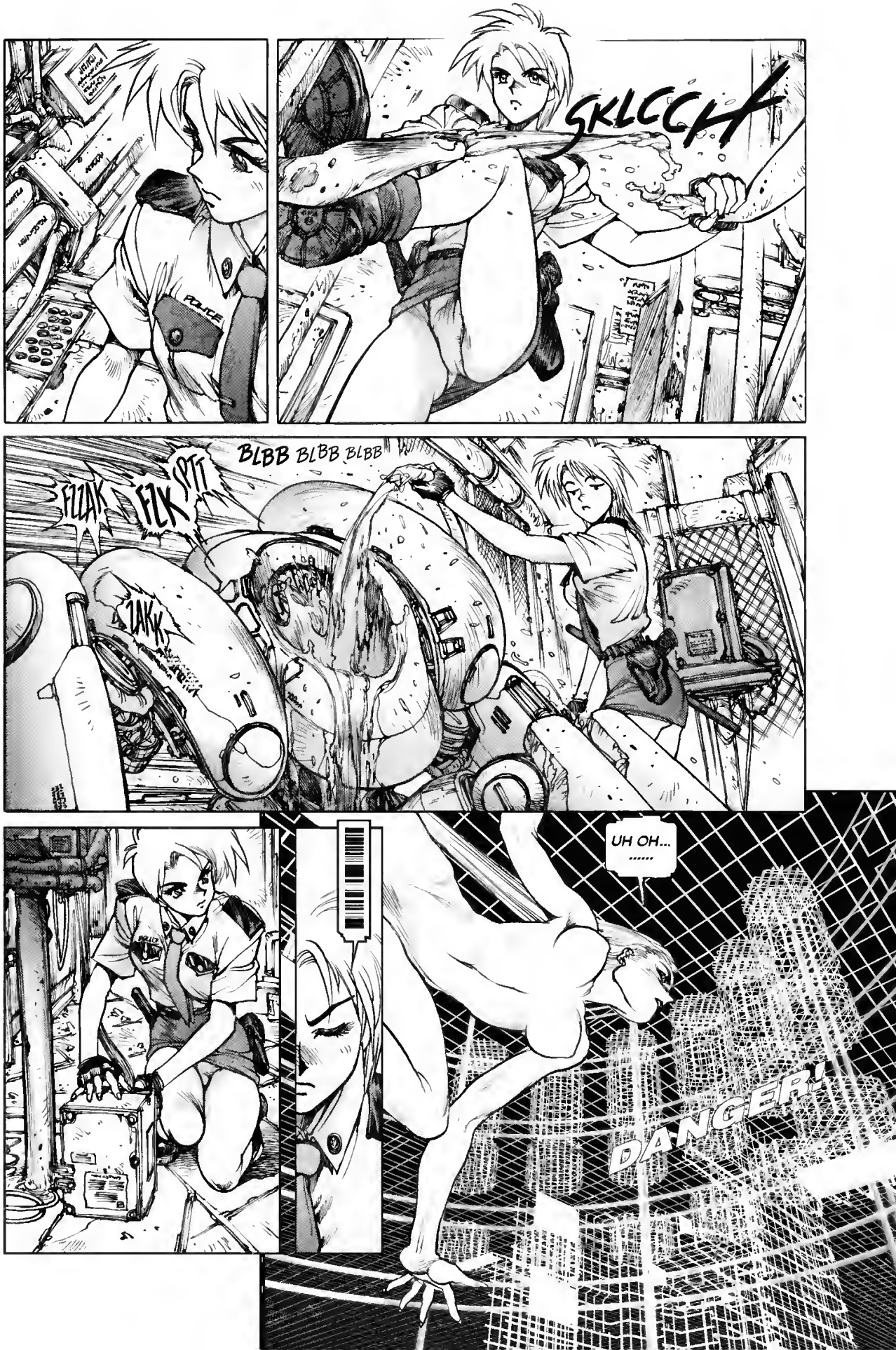
HQ CONTROLLER TO CAR 26... COME IN, PLEASE.
THIS IS CAR 26, OVER.
POLICE FILE N001
P-F0458615
P-M6638245
IRENE HOLE
26 POLICE
!!
YEEOW!
VWHIP
VRMBB
POLICE
HEY! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?! GIMME BACK CONTROL!!
WEOOO
WEOOO
26
POLICE
SKREEEK

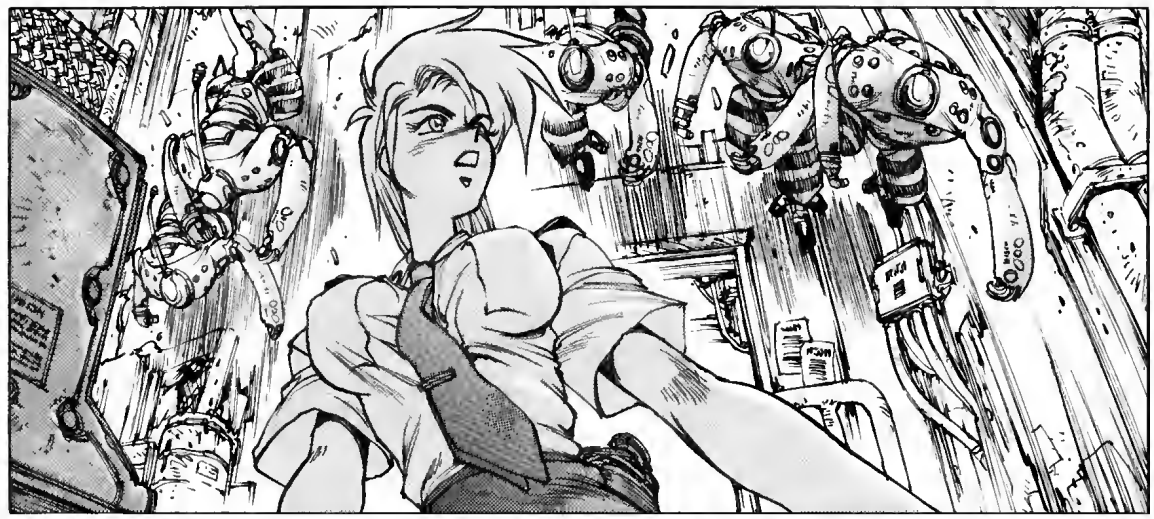
What? No solar panels on the outside of an electric car? You say some even already have 'em? Well, I suppose even a "water car" with fuel cells that electronically break down water to gain hydrogen could use them. Hmm...got to give some more thought to the external texturing of my near-future cars....



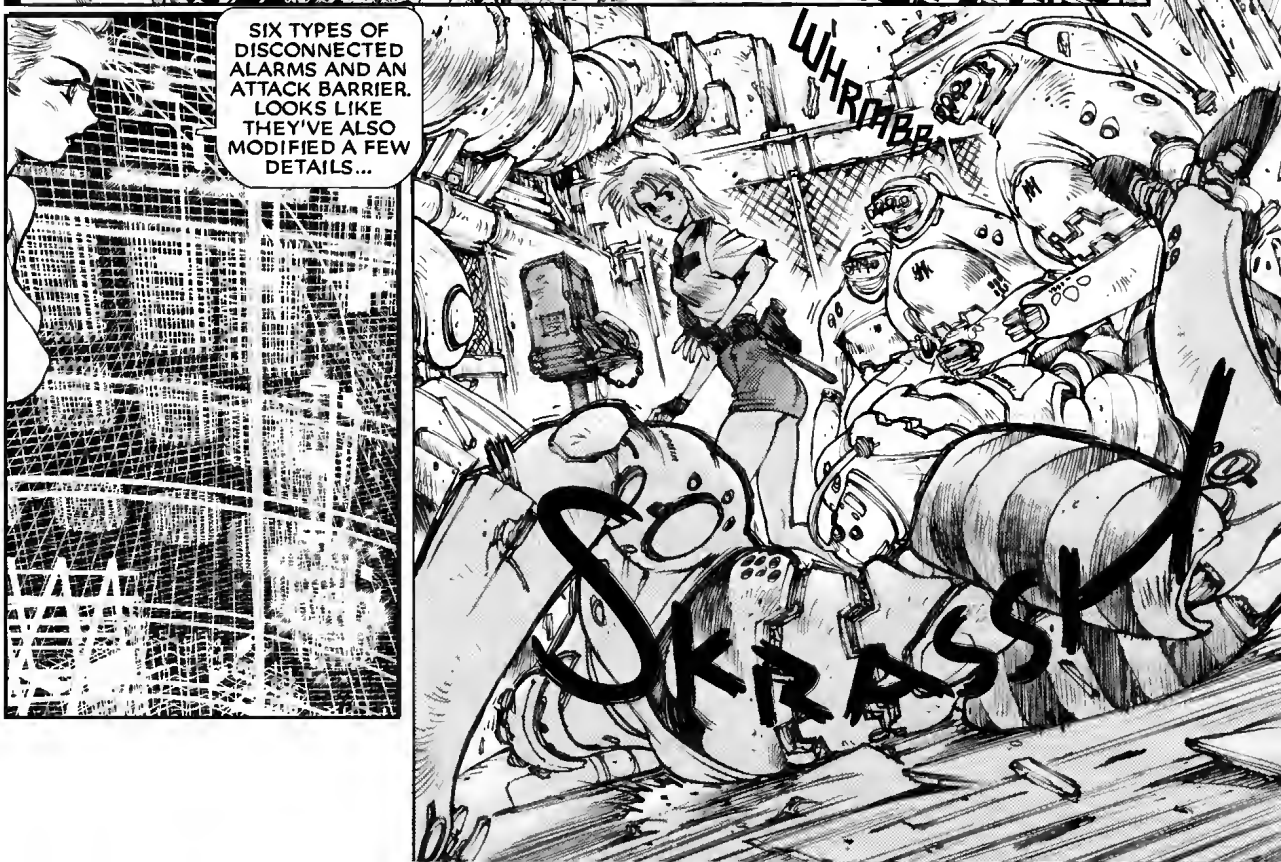

In recent years the media's been talking about a "digital divide," the gap growing between those who can and do use computers and those who can't or won't (ah, you say you know all about this?). But there's another type of digital divide, and that revolves around electronic information; information that has or hasn't been digitized. In this context we've got to be extra careful when people start tossing around terms like "I.T." and watch out for malignant, misleading, and downright *fals*e information, not to mention viruses!

SO THIS IS IT, HERE...
beep
beep
beep
HMPH. .....
SORRY, PAL.
SHPAK


SKLCCH
POLICE
BLBB BLBB BLBB
FZZAK
FZK
SPT
ZAKK
UH OH...
.....
DANGER!



WELL, WELL... IF IT ISN'T A *MINE*.
I WONDER IF THEY PUT IT HERE TO TEST ME AND GAIN SOME TIME...? ODD, IT HASN'T BEEN TRANSFERRED... MAYBE IT'S INTENDED AS AN "AFTER-THE-FACT" ANNOUNCEMENT?


SIX TYPES OF DISCONNECTED ALARMS AND AN ATTACK BARRIER. LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE ALSO MODIFIED A FEW DETAILS...
WHROMBB
SKRASSK

INHRAK BKAM BKAM
POLICE
AH?!
DAMN! WHAT'S WITH THIS ARM?!
CHIKK
GCHAK CHK-CHK
FWHDD
FIVE DIFFERENT FIRE-CONTROL SOFTWARE VERSIONS INSTALLED...? NO WONDER THERE'S A FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT...!
WHOA!

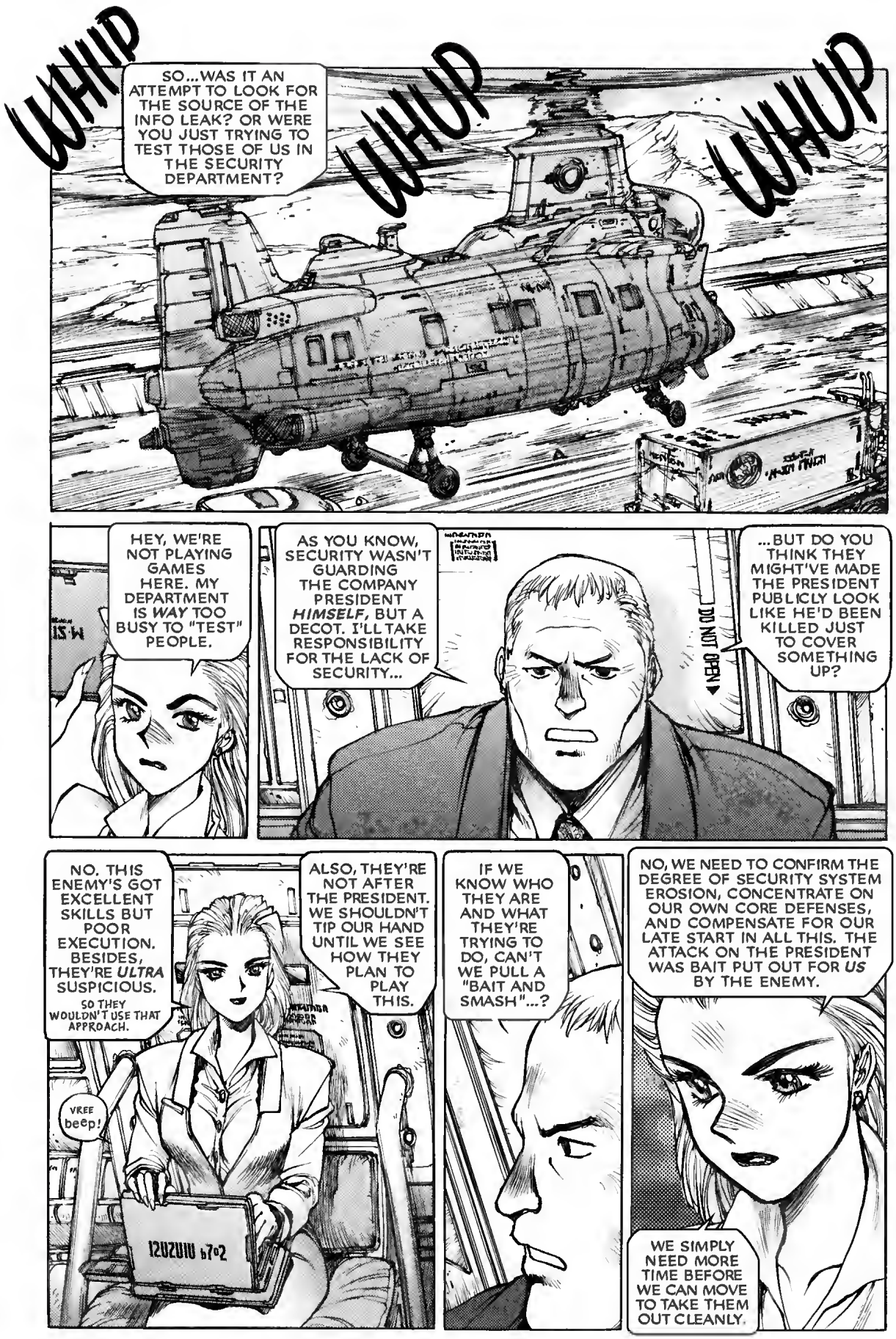
WHRAM
FDD
SKRASH
KRAK

FWHOP
AH... HERE WE GO!
DELETE FILE
OK?
OK
DELETED
TARGET-MAP
BKAM BKAM

SKR ASSH
NOW...*THIS* ONE I'LL JUST DISABLE. THEN I CAN ANALYZE IT AND MAYBE IT'LL LEAD ME TO ITS MASTER.
OR TO THE NEXT TRAP...
DANGER!
SPRAKK
SPAK
SPAK
?!?

Since this is a comic I couldn't depict the movements right, but the guys (or gals) wearing protector suits feel like they're half-covered in a fungus like "athlete's foot," and their movements feel "hiccupy." VIPs wearing bulletproof vests also have similar problems, apparently.

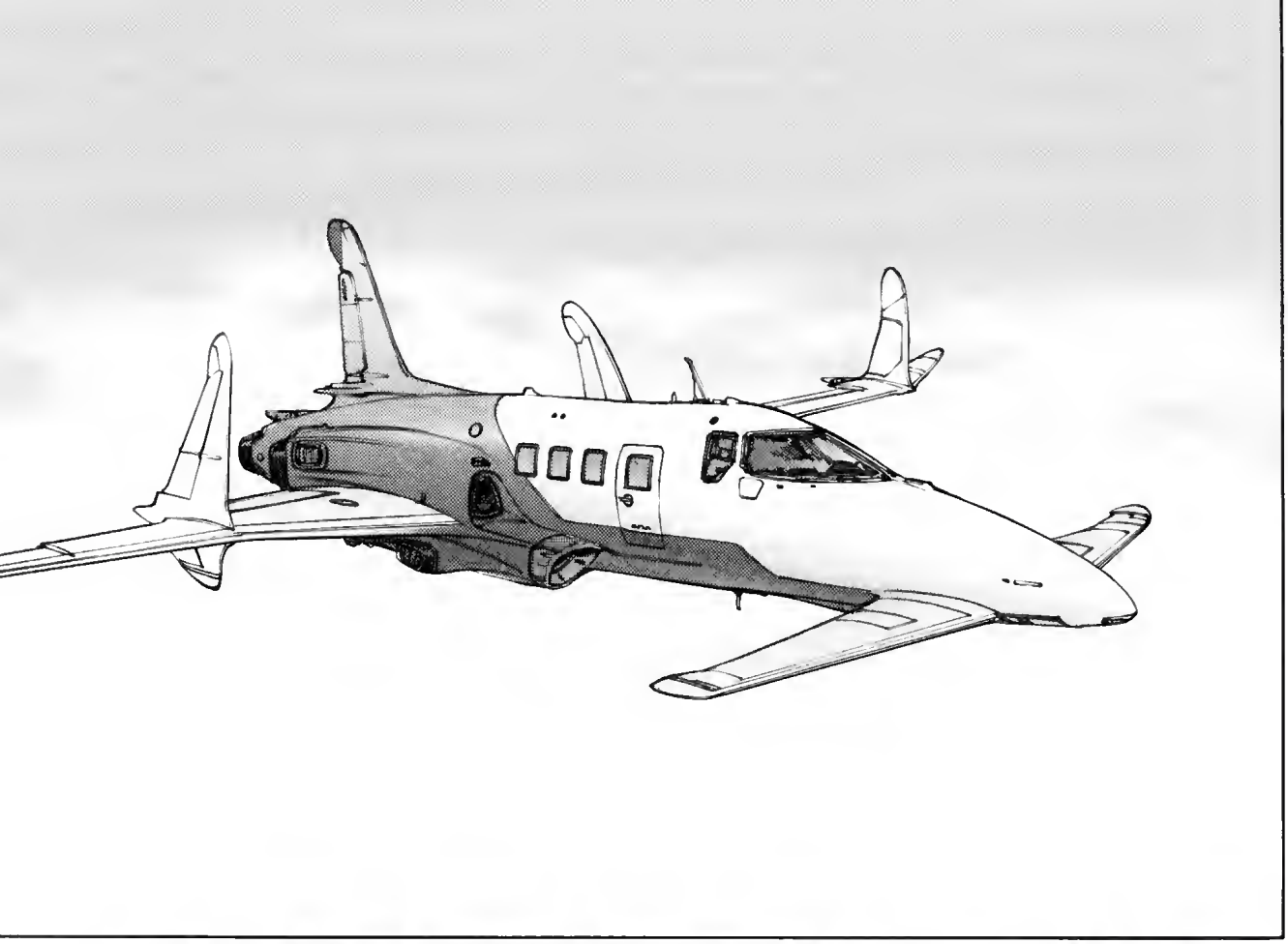
≒PHEWW≒
NOW MOVING TO N16 AT STEALTH-2.
GOOD. BRING THE TEST NOTES AND THE BODY HERE.
AND CHECK FOR ANY BACK-TRACES.
BY THE WAY, WHO AUTHORIZED HAVING AN OUT-SIDER TAG ALONG?
IT'S RATHER DANGEROUS!
THERE WASN'T ANY GOOD REASON TO SAY NO, THAT'S ALL. DON'T BLAME HIM.
JUDGING FROM YOUR VOICE, YOU DON'T SOUND TOO MAD.
DID YOU SCRAWL RUDE COMMENTS ON MY BODY WHILE I WAS OUT?
WELL, DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU SAY TO ME, I MIGHT GET ANGRY.


WHIP
WHUP
WHUP
SO...WAS IT AN ATTEMPT TO LOOK FOR THE SOURCE OF THE INFO LEAK? OR WERE YOU JUST TRYING TO TEST THOSE OF US IN THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT?
HEY, WE'RE NOT PLAYING GAMES HERE. MY DEPARTMENT IS *WAY* TOO BUSY TO "TEST" PEOPLE.
AS YOU KNOW, SECURITY WASN'T GUARDING THE COMPANY PRESIDENT *HIMSELF*, BUT A DECOT. I'LL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LACK OF SECURITY...
...BUT DO YOU THINK THEY MIGHT'VE MADE THE PRESIDENT PUBLICLY LOOK LIKE HE'D BEEN KILLED JUST TO COVER SOMETHING UP?
DO NOT OPEN
NO. THIS ENEMY'S GOT EXCELLENT SKILLS BUT POOR EXECUTION. BESIDES, THEY'RE *ULTRA* SUSPICIOUS.
SO THEY WOULDN'T USE THAT APPROACH.
ALSO, THEY'RE NOT AFTER THE PRESIDENT. WE SHOULDN'T TIP OUR HAND UNTIL WE SEE HOW THEY PLAN TO PLAY THIS.
VREE beep!
IF WE KNOW WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY'RE TRYING TO DO, CAN'T WE PULL A "BAIT AND SMASH"...?
NO, WE NEED TO CONFIRM THE DEGREE OF SECURITY SYSTEM EROSION, CONCENTRATE ON OUR OWN CORE DEFENSES, AND COMPENSATE FOR OUR LATE START IN ALL THIS. THE ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT WAS BAIT PUT OUT FOR *US* BY THE ENEMY.
WE SIMPLY NEED MORE TIME BEFORE WE CAN MOVE TO TAKE THEM OUT CLEANLY.

NORMALLY I'D LEAVE THIS TO THE U.N.'S NET POLICE, BUT IN THIS CASE WE OUGHT TO LET INDIA OR SINGAPORE HANDLE IT.
takka tak tak takka
beep!
I DON'T WANT POSEIDON'S SECRECY FIREWALL DESTROYED OR DAMAGED AS A RESULT OF THIS.
takka beep! tak tak
WELL, I DON'T LIKE WAITING PASSIVELY UNTIL WE HAVE MORE VICTIMS.
CAN'T YOU JUST RECONFIGURE THE DEFENSES? THEN--
UH OH! LOOKS LIKE WE'VE ALREADY GOT SOME DAMAGE!
THE ANTI-VIRAL SYSTEM'S FLAKED...THE VIRUS THE ENEMY'S USING REJECTS ALL READ ATTEMPTS!
CLEVER!
GACK!
IT'S PENETRATED THREE BARRIERS!
BREEP! FZZK SPRK BZZT
MAX!
SEARCH FOR A "RAT" THAT OPENS IN AN INFECTED STATE WITHIN THE ORIGINAL BODY!
YES, MA'AM.
BOTH E-BRAIN AND NET ARE OUT... IT'S A PROTECTION 4 STAND-ALONE TYPE.
HMM...
LISTEN, I'VE GOT A FRIEND IN THE PUBLIC SECURITY NETWORK. WANT ME TO HAVE HIM DO A SEARCH FOR PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE AFTER THE PRESIDENT?
I MIGHT ASK FOR THAT WHEN THE TIME COMES. BUT NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'VE GOT TO GO TO SLEEP.
"SLEEP"...? B...BUT ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WERE DOING UNTIL JUST A COUPLE MINUTES--
??
Z

GIMNY 30: Name of a prosthetic body control software.
"30" indicates it's the fiscal 2030 version.

This book was originally published in 2001, which the Japanese government declared the "First Year of the I.T. Era." While a tad slow out of the gate, they're apparently going to promote digitalization and English education. Of course, if we're really going to promote this in our rapidly aging society, we'd probably be better off investing in R&D for multi-language translation software (as they're apparently doing at the U.N.) or subsidizing R&D on super-simple user interfaces...but are we doing so? Or doing enough? Or even getting any results?



SOMETHING TO DRINK, MS. ARAMAKI...?
NO, I'M FINE.
SORRY TO IMPOSE ON YOU LIKE THIS...
NO NEED TO WORRY.
HMM. YOU'RE *DEFINITELY* MORE ON TOP OF THIS THAN I AM. PLEASE... HAVE A SEAT.
THANK YOU.
YOU SEEM TO HAVE RELAXED CONSIDERABLY. THE STARS ARE ALIGNED WELL, TOO.
YOUR MULTIPLE CONSCIOUSNESSES APPEAR TO HAVE GRADUALLY WOVEN THEMSELVES TOGETHER AND TRULY BECOME ONE.
YES, I CAN ACTUALLY RECOGNIZE *REALITY* QUITE RELIABLY NOW.
FOR EXAMPLE, I CAN NOW RECONCILE AS A MERE "EXPERIENCE" THE FACT THAT I WAS ONCE A PIANO TEACHER IN A SMALL MUSIC SCHOOL FOR SEVEN YEARS.

....
....
DO YOU THINK THIS "TRANSFORMATION" IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT YOU NOW HAVE A *TOTALLY* PROSTHETIC BODY?
WELL, SOMETHING HAD *ALREADY* STARTED HAPPENING... EITHER WHEN I GOT A PROSTHETIC BODY, RECEIVED GENERAL ANESTHESIA, WAS IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, OR WHEN I WAS E-BRAINED YEARS AGO.
HA HA...
?
WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE IT SOMEDAY, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THE TRUTH.
ANTARES... I *DO* HAVE ONE QUESTION FOR YOU.
AND WHAT MIGHT THAT BE?
HAVE YOU EVER MET THE COMPANY PRESIDENT ...?
HE...
HE SEEMS TO BE FAR AWAY...

TPE: Code for Chiang Kai-Shek Airport in Taiwan.

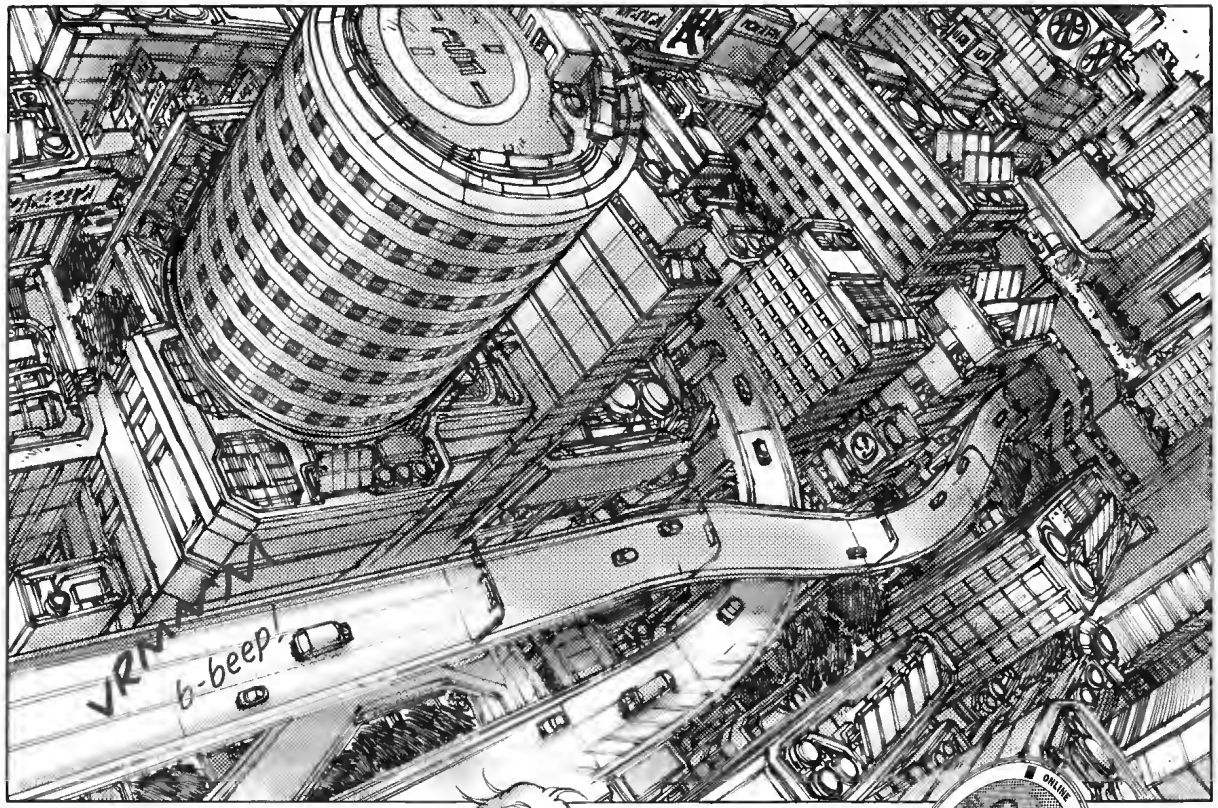
WHEW
CAUTION
?
BREEP! chik chik FTTT
HMM...THAT'S ODD. HOW DID THAT HOMELESS GUY GET IN HERE...?
??
B.U.G.S MOBILE

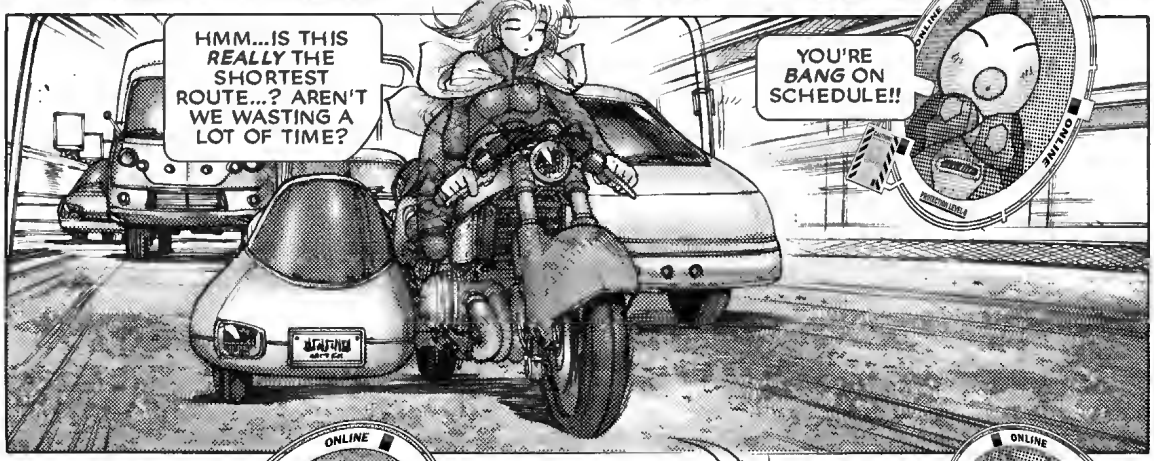
"Scattering" in this case refers to a scattering of radio waves coming in via satellite.

I don't really know if internal combustion engines will still be around by the time of this story, but I decided to draw them because they're easier to understand than silent electric engines. One selling point for electric vehicles is that they're quieter, but it seems to me that it'd be dangerous for them to be completely silent, especially in the city. Perhaps I'm worrying too much? The details on the bikes don't have much connection to reality. Forgive me, bike lovers!

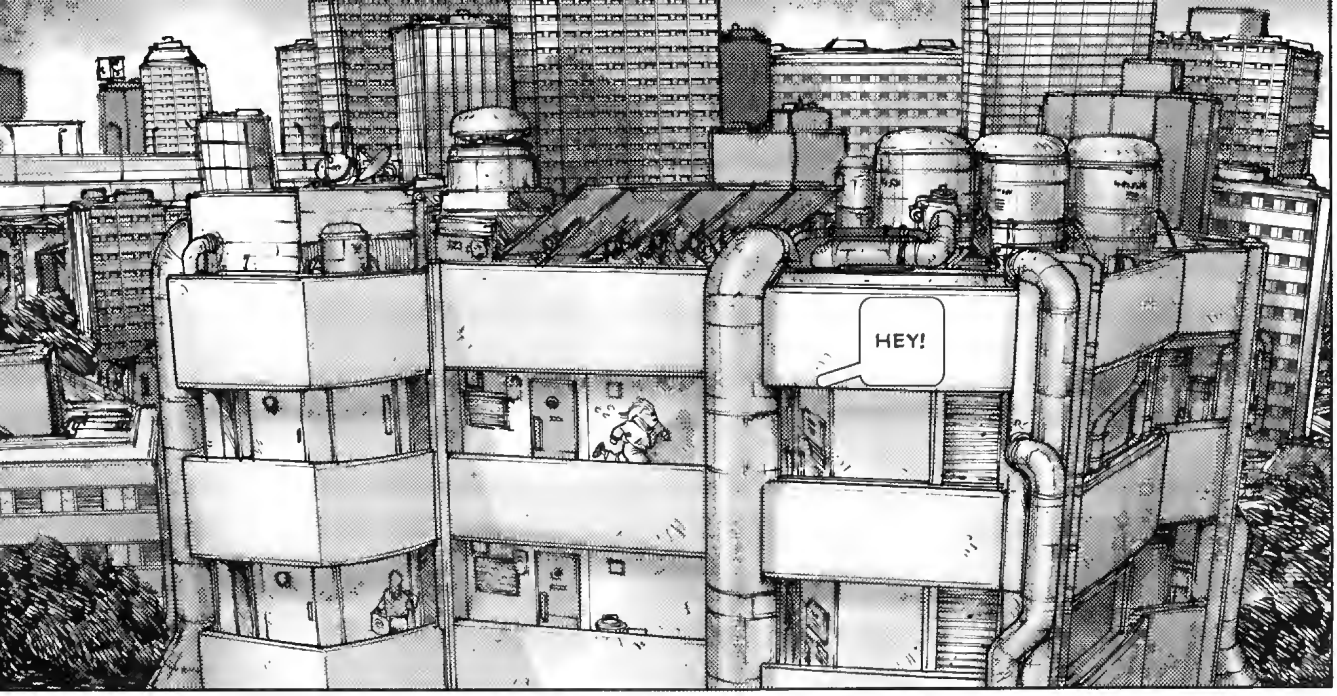
NANKAI DELIVERY, WITH A LITTLE SOMETHIN' FOR YA. C.O.D. LEMME SEE THE CASH.
NO E-MONEY, CARDS, STOCKS, OR SUCH ACCEPTED. IN GOD WE TRUST, ALL OTHERS PAY CASH.
WHAT A WEIRD COMPANY.
HERE. GOODS AND RECEIPT, PLEASE.
FWIP
KSSH
beep CHK CHK
beep!
PASSED. GIVE.
BRMBB BRMBB BRMBB

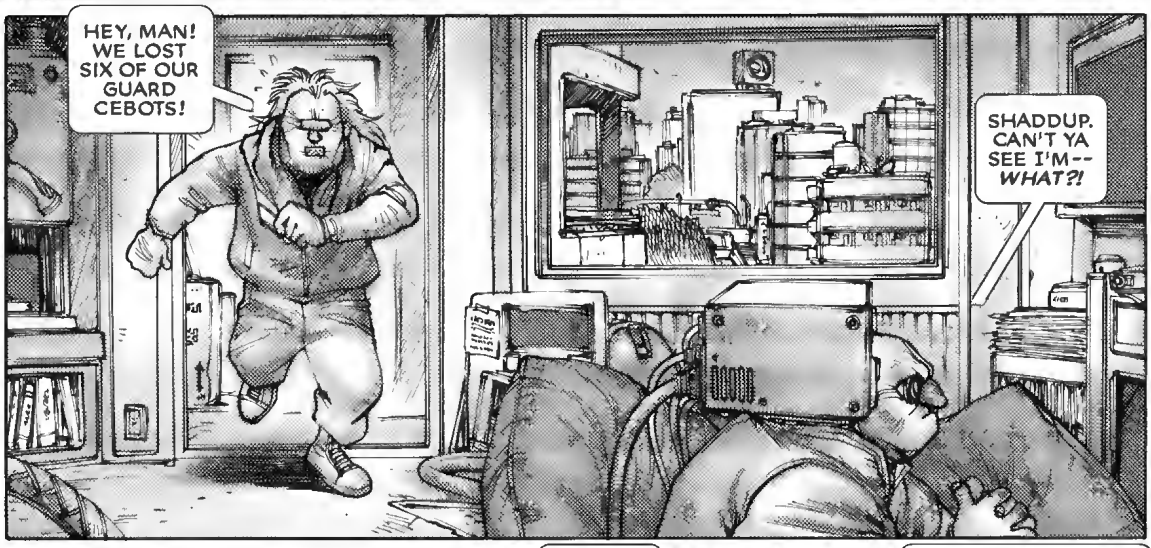
To improve the security of computers, the easiest thing is to *not* connect them to a network. But that's not a very good solution for most people, because they can't afford *not* to connect. In the near future we'll probably be inundated by networked household appliances, or I.T. appliances, and we'll need really good anti-virus strategies for them. Those who have appliances with heating elements or lots of family information stored in them will have to be especially careful. Somehow it scares me to think of card-keys and fingerprint readers being used on my front door. So get to work, all you experts out there, I'm depending on you! (And how about running a network over the existing electrical wiring in a home? Does it really work? Is it safe?)

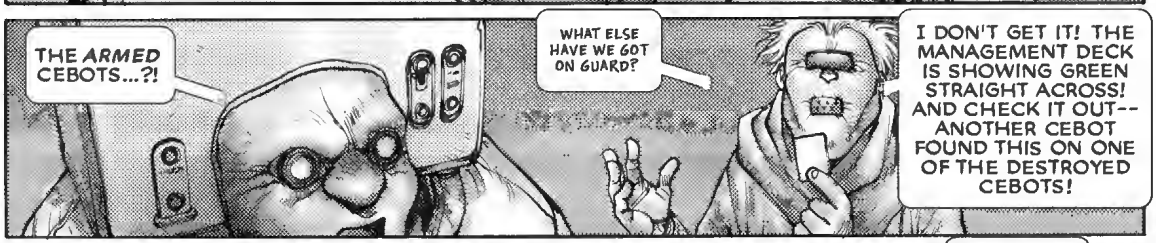

VRMMM
b-beep!

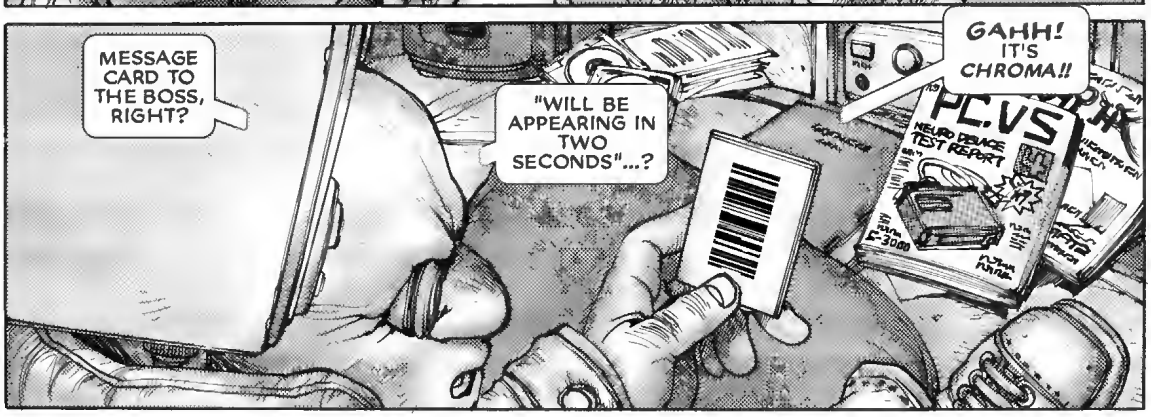

HMM...IS THIS *REALLY* THE SHORTEST ROUTE...? AREN'T WE WASTING A LOT OF TIME?
YOU'RE *BANG* ON SCHEDULE!!
ONLINE

THAT E-BRAIN P.I., *ALGREN,* IS WORKING IN THE OFFICE AS USUAL. WE "CANCELLED" THE CEBOTS HE HAD DEPLOYED. HEH, HEH.
I NEED YOU TO FIND ME TWO BODIES NEARBY, FOR BACKUP.
*ARMED,* RIGHT? DON'T WORRY, I'LL GET 'EM.
ONLINE


HEY!

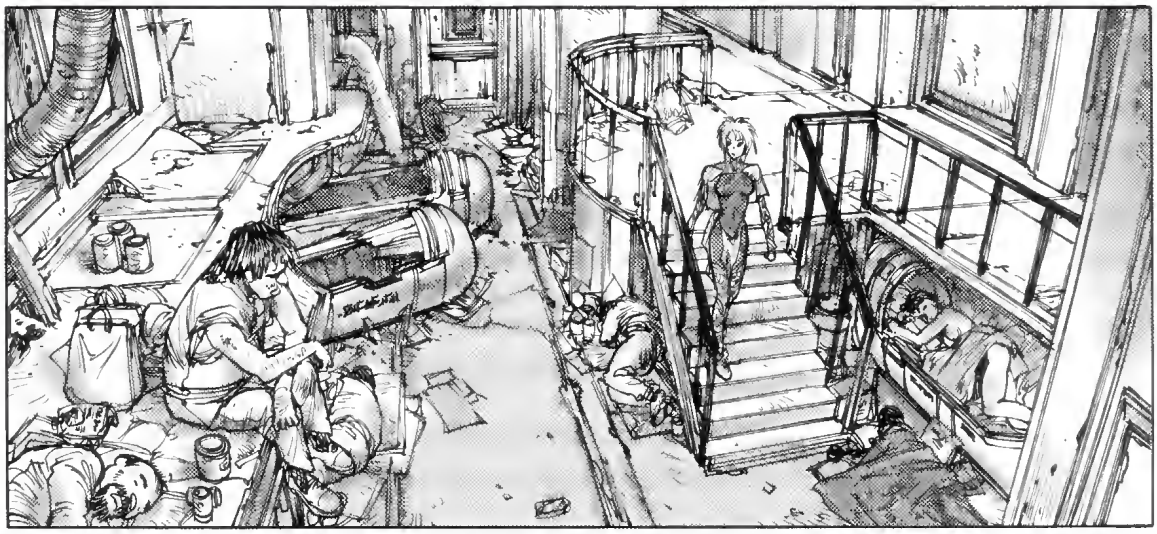

HEY, MAN! WE LOST SIX OF OUR GUARD CEBOTS!
SHADDUP. CAN'T YA SEE I'M-- WHAT?!

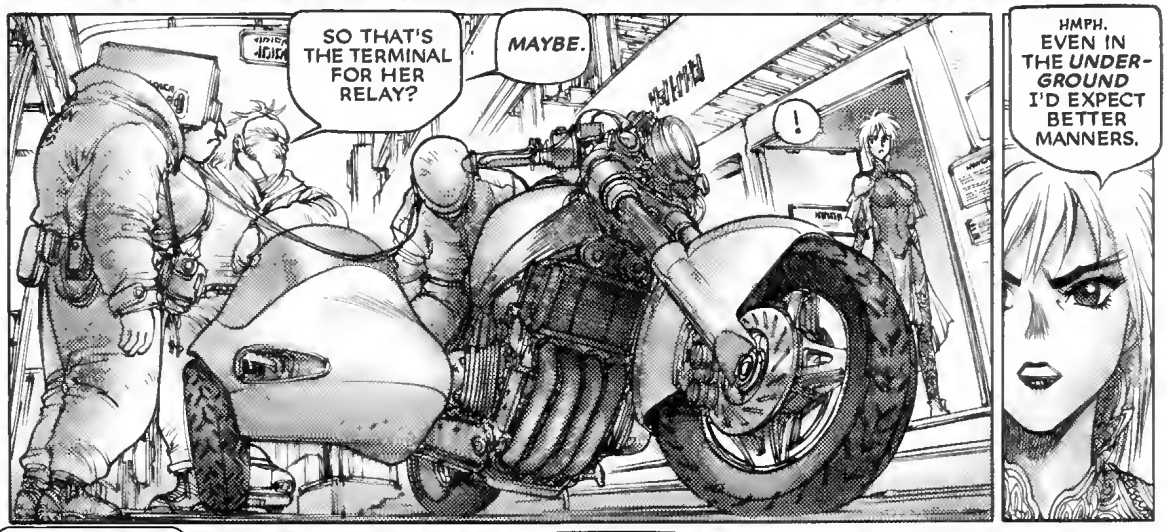

THE ARMED CEBOTS...?!
WHAT ELSE HAVE WE GOT ON GUARD?
I DON'T GET IT! THE MANAGEMENT DECK IS SHOWING GREEN STRAIGHT ACROSS! AND CHECK IT OUT-- ANOTHER CEBOT FOUND THIS ON ONE OF THE DESTROYED CEBOTS!


MESSAGE CARD TO THE BOSS, RIGHT?
"WILL BE APPEARING IN TWO SECONDS"...?
GAHH! IT'S CHROMA!!
PC.VS
WEIRD DEVICE TEST REPORT

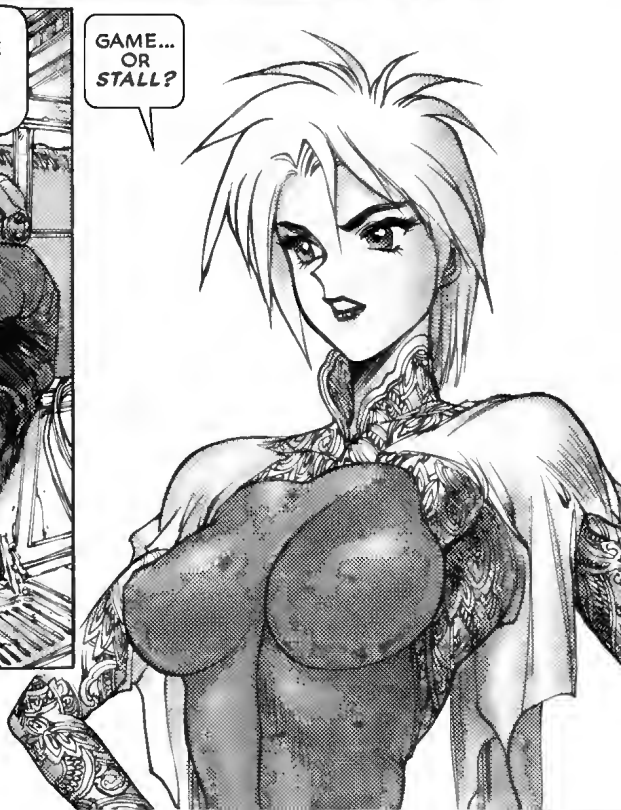
WE GOT *BIG* TROUBLE! WHERE'S THE BOSS?!
IN A MEETING. WASSUP...?
IT'S *CHROMA!* CHROMA'S COMING HERE!!
WAIT A SEC... WHO'S THE BOSS MEETING WITH NOW?
CHROMA. WANNA SEE?
ONLINE
NO PEEKING, BUDDY!
WANNA GET FRIED?
ONLINE
CAUTION! DATA PROTECTED
PROTECTION LEVEL-8
SH...SHE'S EVEN TAKEN OVER OUR *SECURITY CAMERAS?!*
YEAH, ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES AGO.
WEIRD, THOUGH. GIVEN CHROMA'S CAPABILITIES, WHY ASK THE BOSS FOR *ANYTHING?*
MY SECRETARY HAS A POINT...
...DON'T YOU THINK?

LOOKS LIKE THE INPUT'S FROM A WIRED PUBLIC TERMINAL, SO IT CAN'T BE TRACED FROM E-PRINTS.
NO *ROM* RESIDUALS, NO CONFLICT FRAGMENTS... *HRM.*
LOOKS LIKE A SINGLE-BRAIN *AI* MADE FOR GAMES...SLIGHTLY MODIFIED. IT'S COMPACT AND RANDOMIZED.
CAN'T DO A TRACE BASED ON JUST THIS. *HRM*...LOOKS LIKE THE NEURO SECTION WAS AFFECTED BY THE ENCOUNTER. MAYBE I CAN MANUALLY MANIPULATE IT VIA HARDWARE...
WELL, WILL YOU DO IT OR NOT? PICK ONE!
THE LAST TIME I TURNED YOU DOWN I WOUND UP LOCKED IN A MULTIPHASIC VIRAL ATTACK FOR THREE MONTHS AND UNDERGOING A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE.
NO KIDDING...? GUESS YOU NEED STRONGER ANTI-BODIES. IF PRICE IS NO OBJECT, I COULD SELL YOU SOME GOOD ONES. ♥
I'LL BE WAITING OUTSIDE.

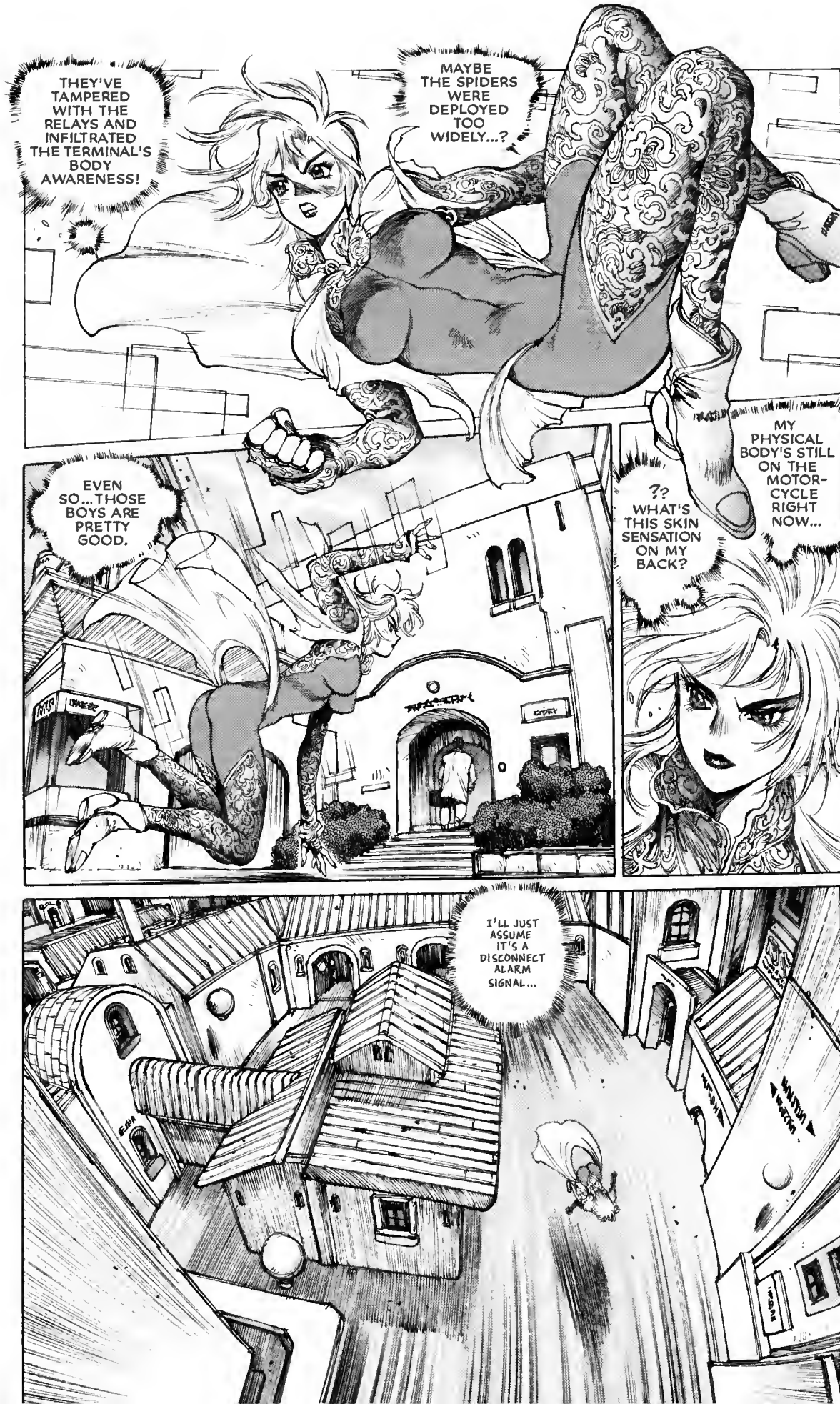



SO THAT'S THE TERMINAL FOR HER RELAY?
MAYBE.
!
HMPH. EVEN IN THE *UNDER-GROUND* I'D EXPECT BETTER MANNERS.

HEY...IS SHE REALLY A TERMINAL THAT SOMEONE'S MANIPULATING?
HER MOVEMENTS SEEM TOO NATURAL...
'SCUSE US, BUT...WE WERE TOLD TO MAKE SURE YOU DIDN'T GET BORED WHILE WAITING.
SO HOW ABOUT WE PLAY A LITTLE *GAME...?*

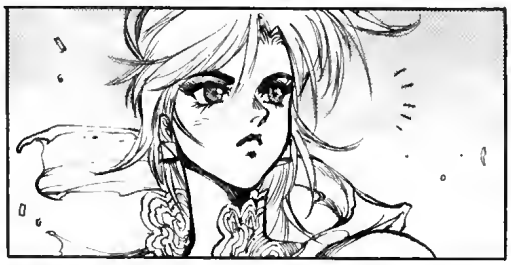

GAME... OR *STALL?*

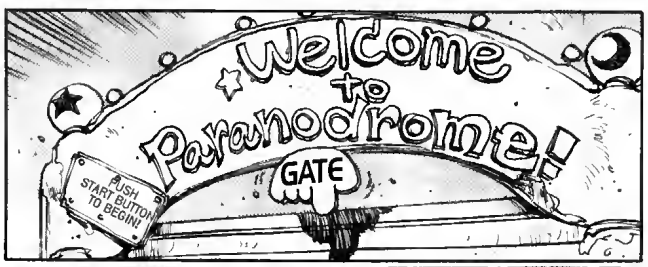
By "fast," the man means the time it took her to find an access route, break through the barriers, infiltrate the target, and turn off the line.



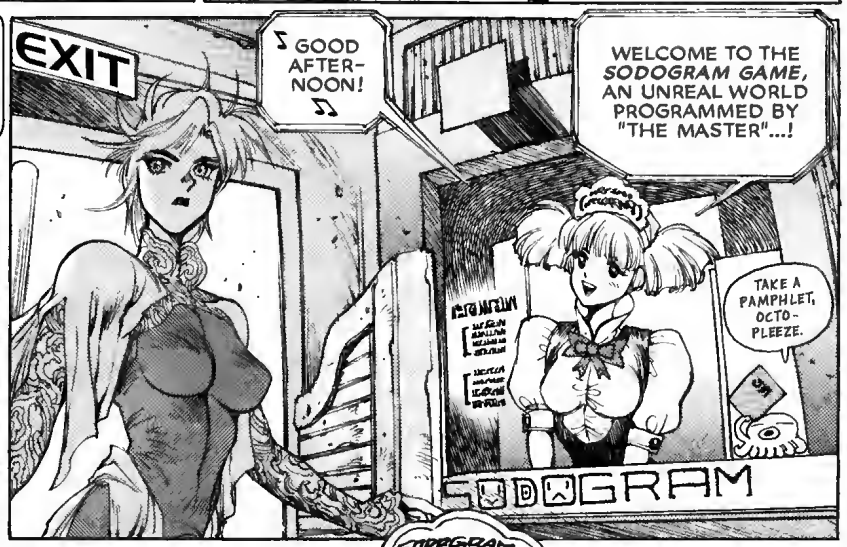

In this particular work, the e-brain matrix space is only drawn for effect. In reality there's no image like this, nor any such "space." But the "game program space" depicted beginning on this page assumes that visual, auditory, and olfactory senses have been made as real as possible and that the laws of the physical world do appear to apply...at least to some extent.

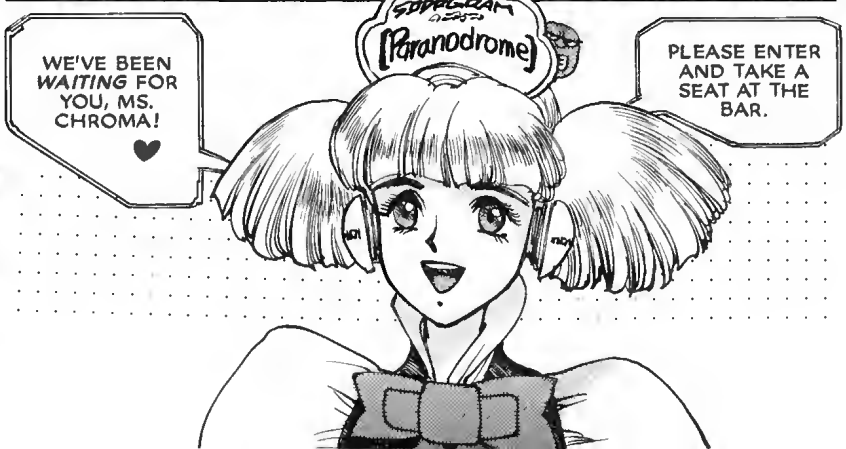
ENTRANCE
Welcome to Paranodrome!
GATE

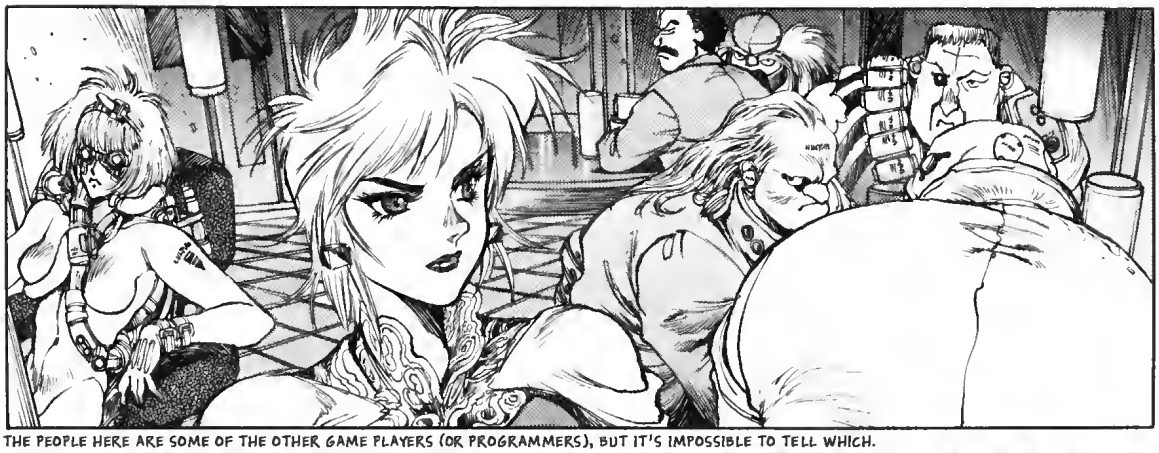



Welcome to Paranodrome!
GATE
PUSH START BUTTON TO BEGIN!

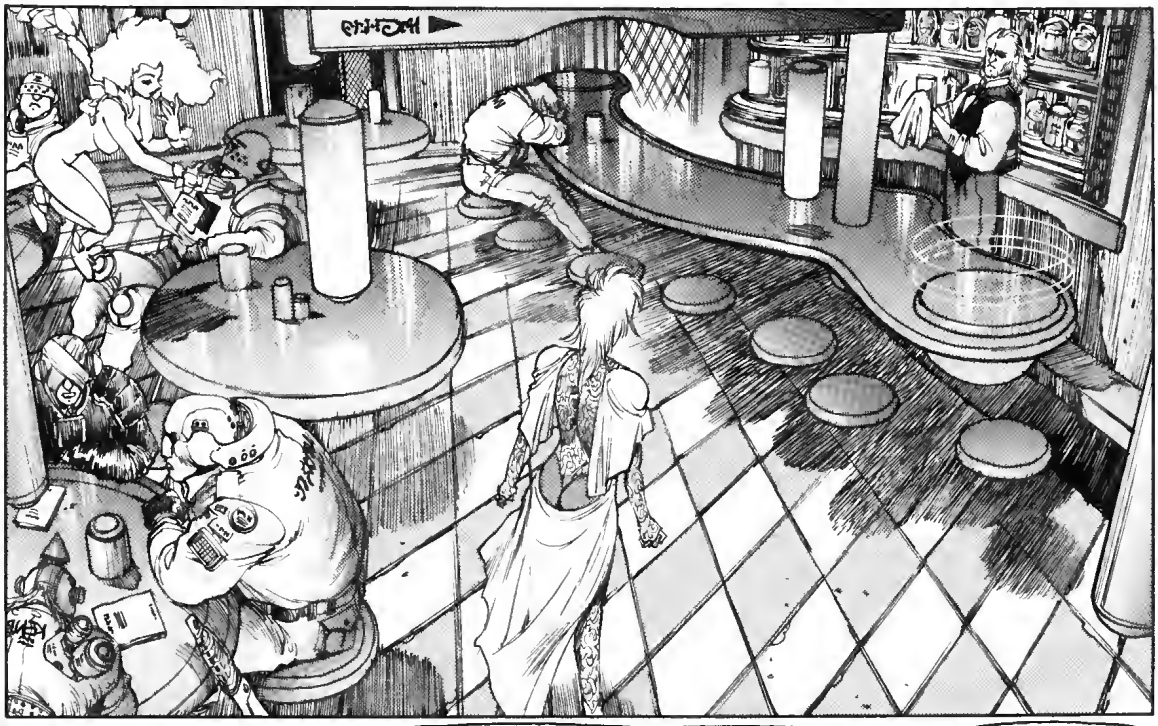
I WONDER AT WHAT POINT I WAS PULLED INTO THIS GAME...?

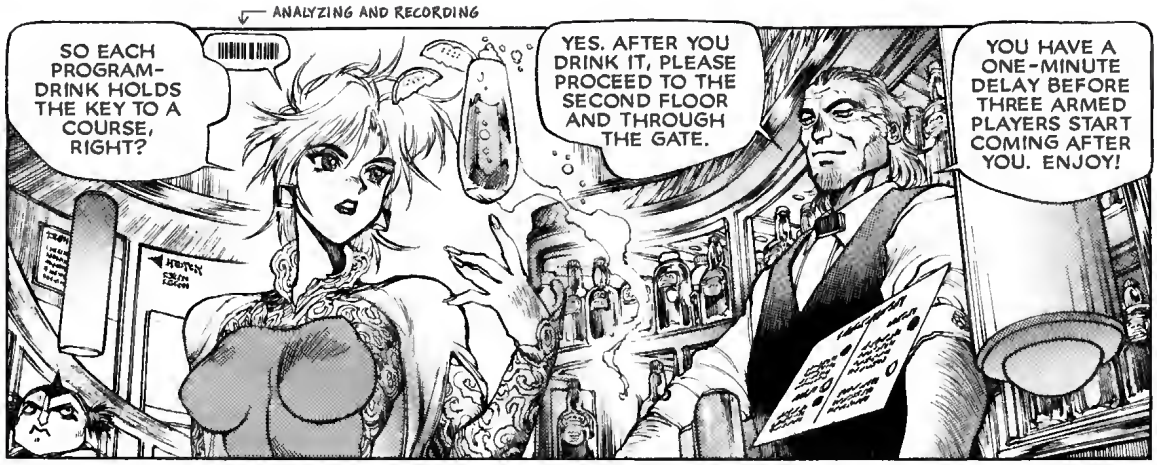

EXIT
♫ GOOD AFTER-NOON! ♫
WELCOME TO THE SODOGRAM GAME, AN UNREAL WORLD PROGRAMMED BY "THE MASTER"...!
TAKE A PAMPHLET, OCTO-PLEEZE.
SODOGRAM

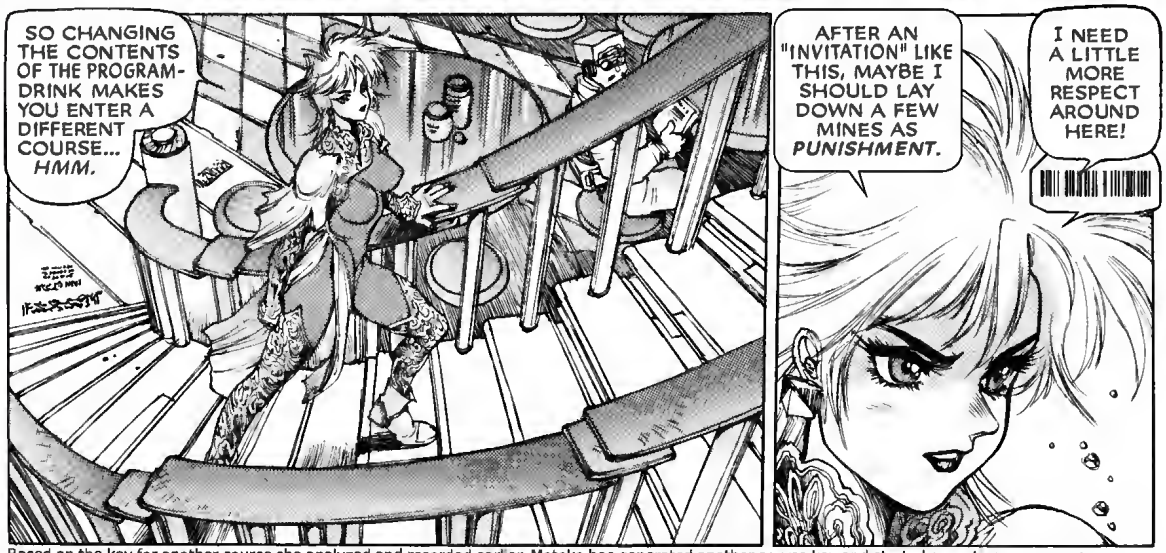

WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, MS. CHROMA!
SODOGRAM [Paranodrome]
PLEASE ENTER AND TAKE A SEAT AT THE BAR.



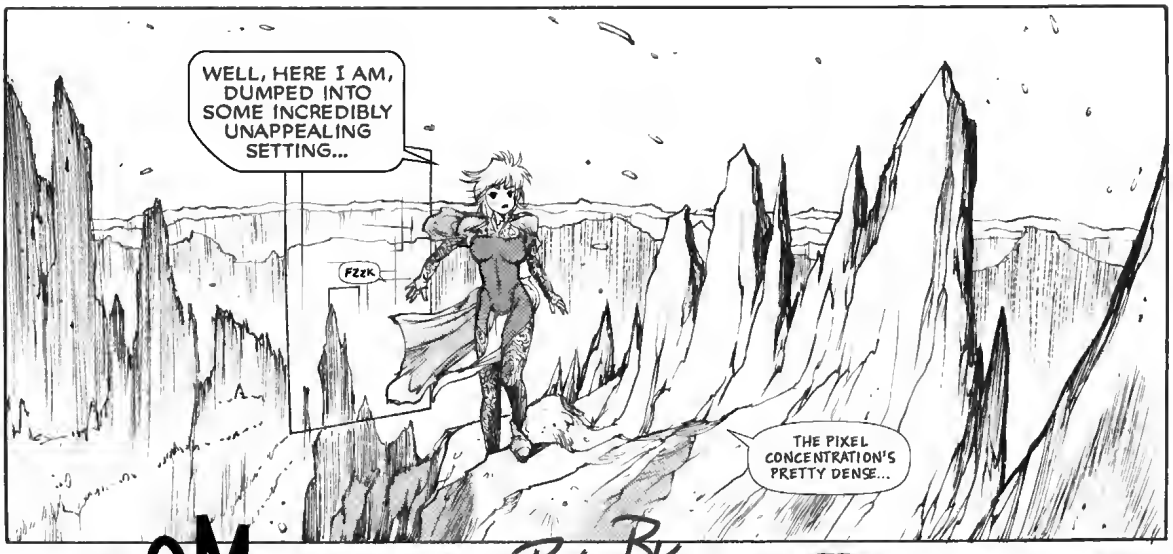
THE PEOPLE HERE ARE SOME OF THE OTHER GAME PLAYERS (OR PROGRAMMERS), BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL WHICH.

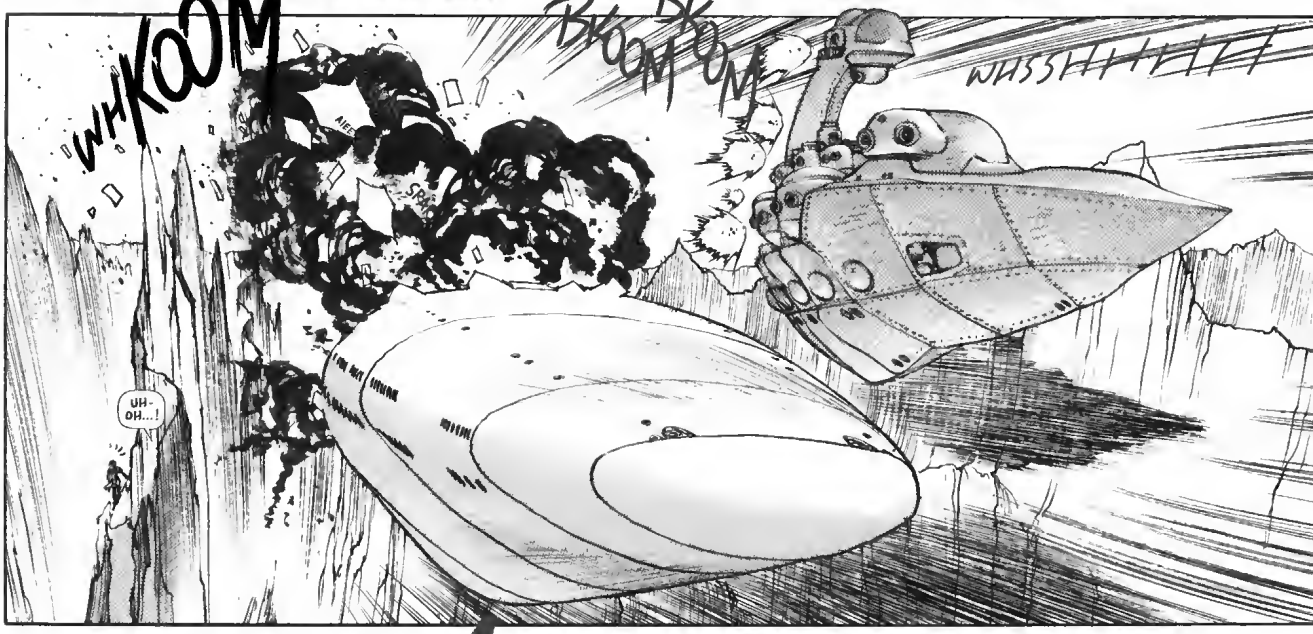


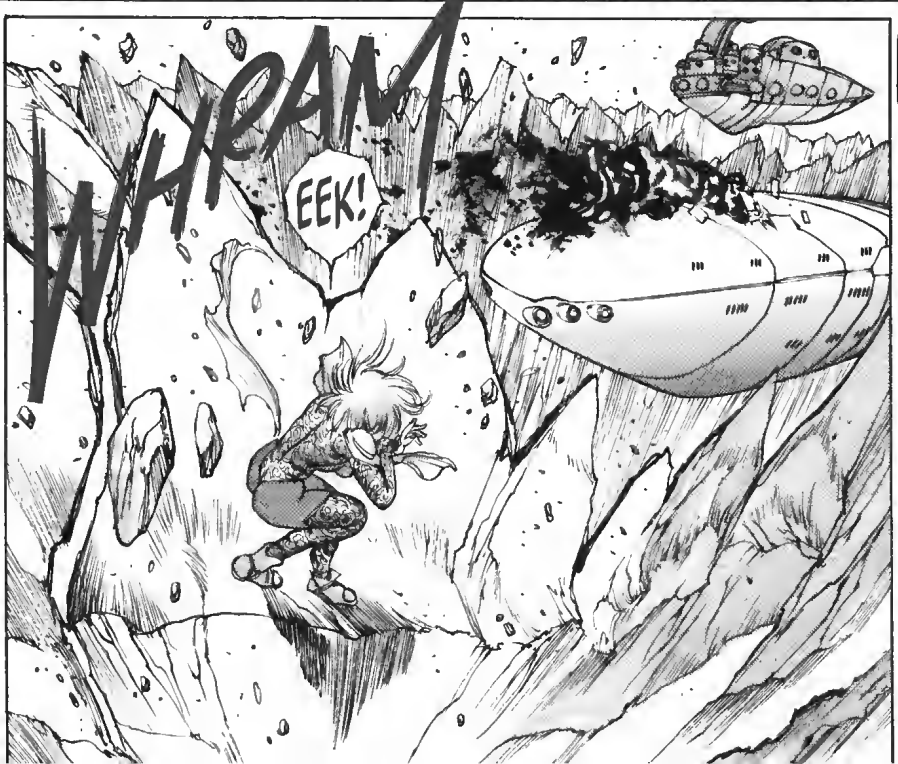



Based on the key for another course she analyzed and recorded earlier, Motoko has generated another course key and started executing a new program.

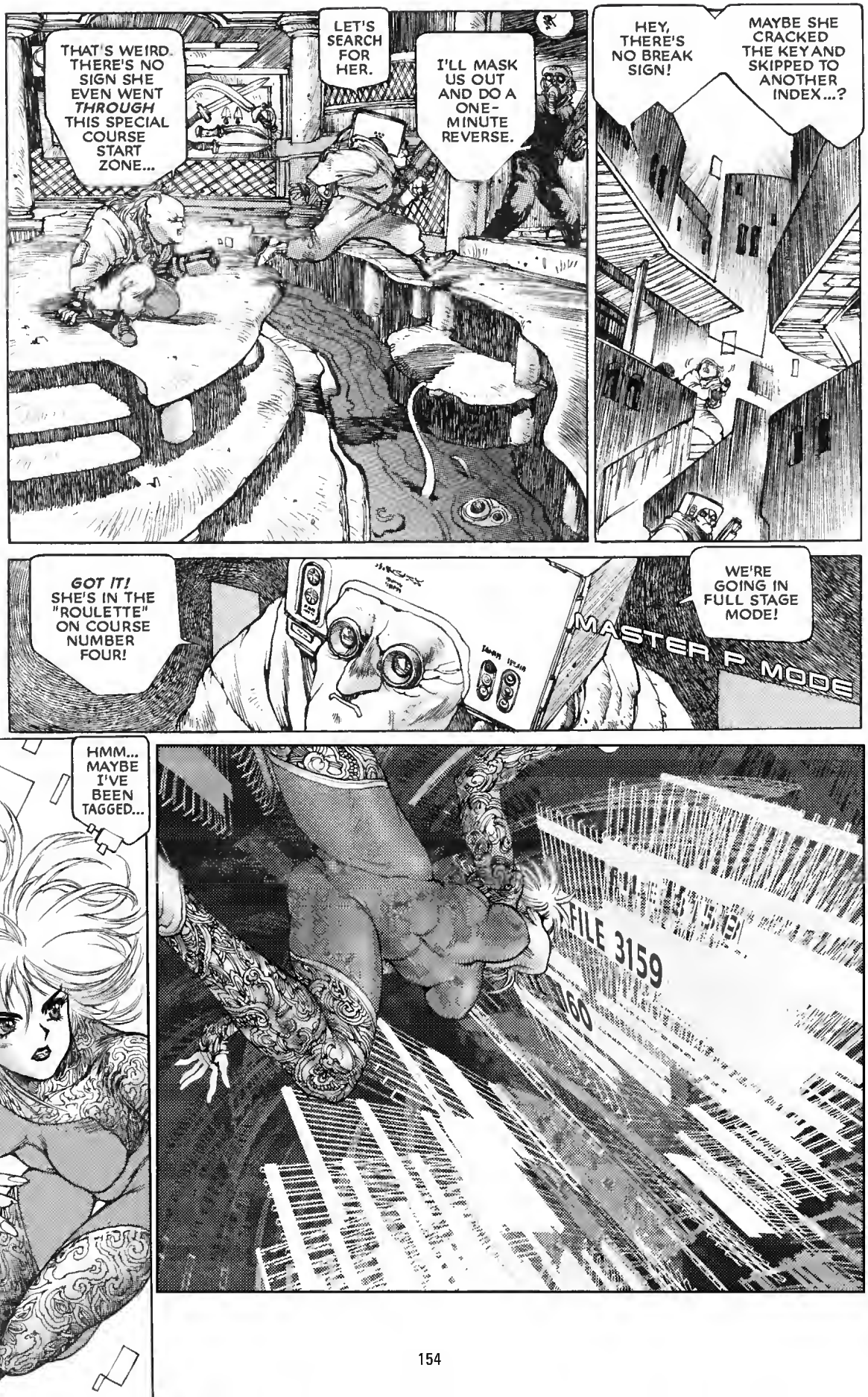


CODE KEY FOR ALTERNATE COURSE

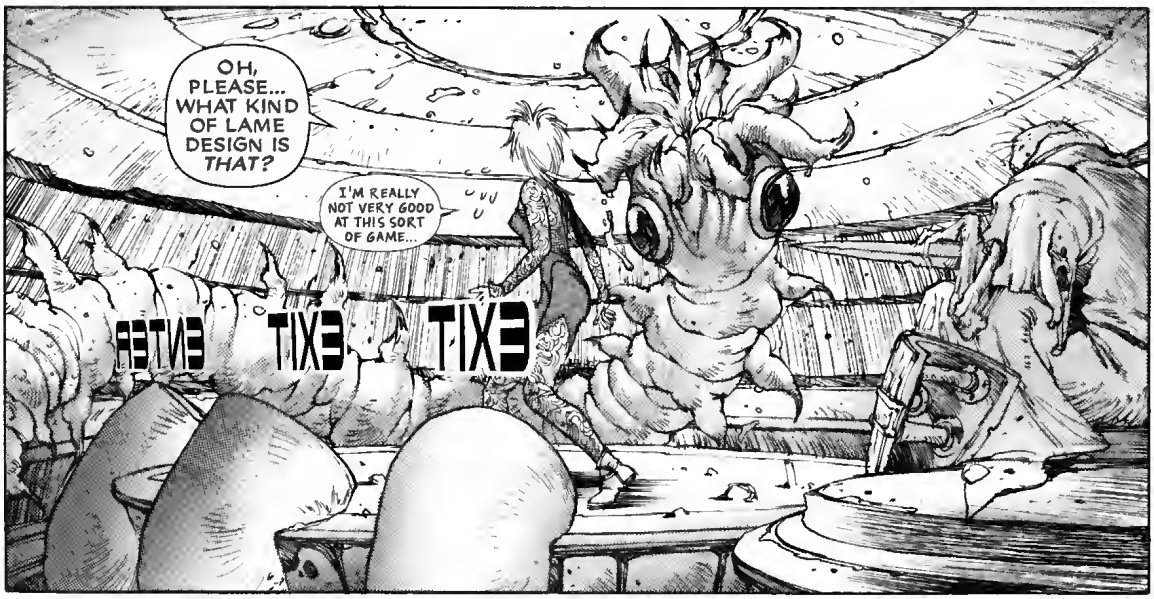
It's not clear here whether this is a scene from an RPG or a shooting game.

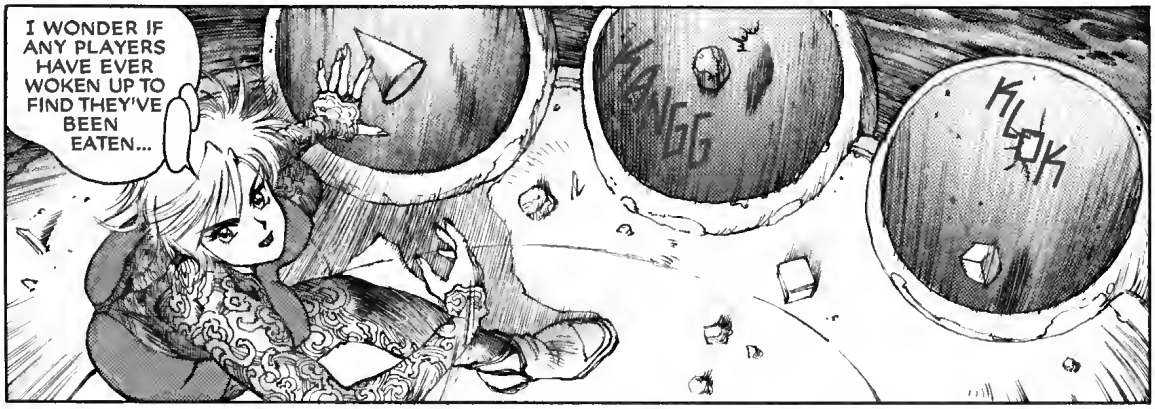

THAT'S WEIRD. THERE'S NO SIGN SHE EVEN WENT *THROUGH* THIS SPECIAL COURSE START ZONE...
LET'S SEARCH FOR HER.
I'LL MASK US OUT AND DO A ONE-MINUTE REVERSE.
HEY, THERE'S NO BREAK SIGN!
MAYBE SHE CRACKED THE KEY AND SKIPPED TO ANOTHER INDEX...?
*GOT IT!* SHE'S IN THE "ROULETTE" ON COURSE NUMBER FOUR!
WE'RE GOING IN FULL STAGE MODE!
MASTER P MODE
HMM... MAYBE I'VE BEEN TAGGED...
FILE 3159
60

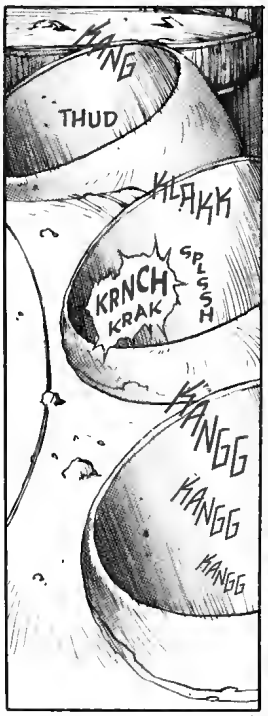
If you were the one who entered this stage instead of Chroma, what action would you take next? Choose from among the following: (1) Remain where you are for some reason or because you don't know what to do. (2) Go right for some reason. (3) Go straight for some reason. (4) Go left for some reason. (Note that left is the direction taken in the fifth panel, right is the seventh panel.) If *you* had only five seconds to decide, what would you do?

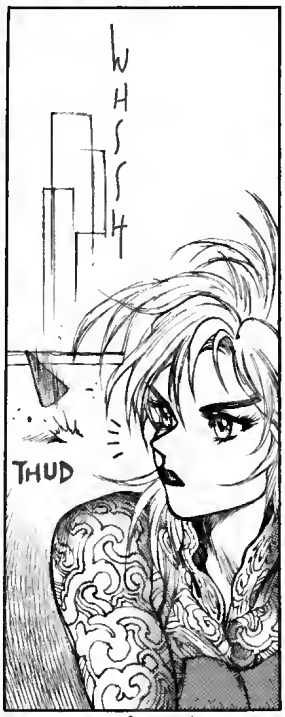
Motoko doesn't feel the effect, but normally there's a major emotion (fear or delight) included in the package. Players usually become involved with and experience this emotion.

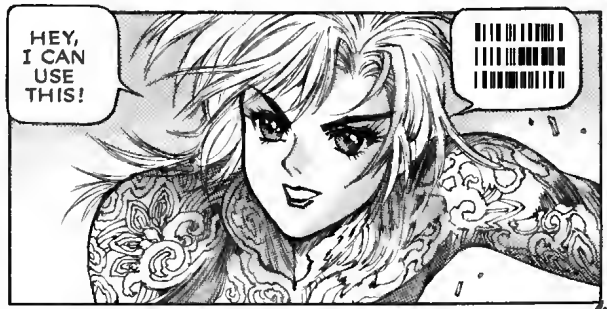
I GET IT... THERE ARE AS MANY MULTIPLE CHOICE PATHWAYS AS THERE ARE LAYERS IN THESE FILE STACKS.
FILE 3025
FILE 3026
FILE 3027
BUT IN THIS COURSE, MAYBE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO FIRST CHECK THE NUMBER OF STAGES YOU PLAN TO CLEAR *BEFORE* ENTERING...
HMM...
THAT WOULD ACTUALLY EXPLAIN A LOT...
FZZK
ENTER EXIT EXIT
I WONDER IF THERE'S A HANDICAP OR SOME SORT OF TRANS-FORMATION GIVEN TO THE SECOND VISITOR?
OR MAYBE IT'S JUST A COURSE TO EARN SMALL CHANGE OR EXPERIENCE POINTS...?
BLBB



In this story, "waking up" refers to returning from cyberspace to reality. A totally mechanized cyborg like Chroma (who here is actually functioning as a remote terminal for Motoko) normally doesn't "wake up" as easily as a human with an e-brain.

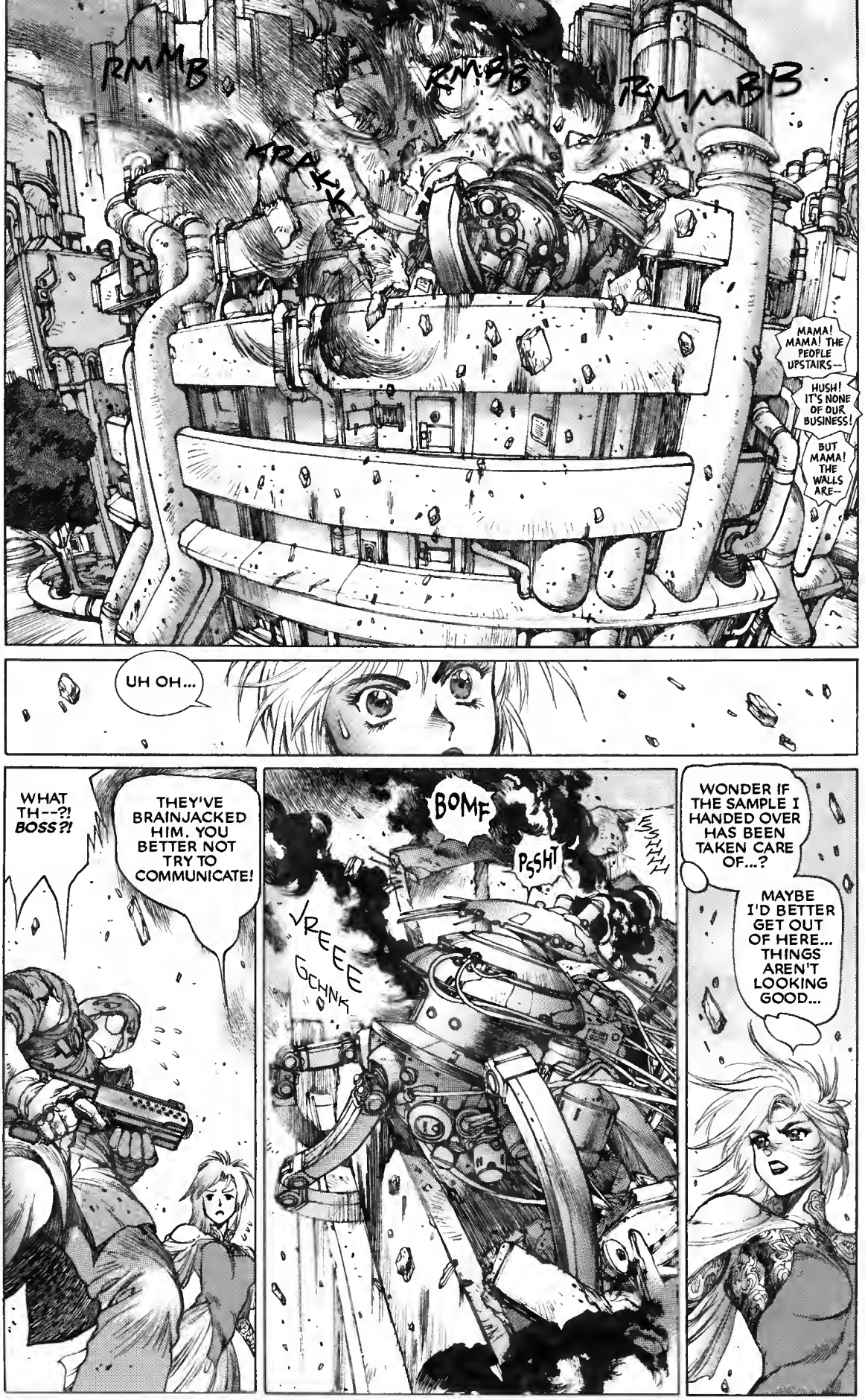
E-brain humans normally wake up sooner than cyborgs because their bodies make more independent demands on them (hunger, the desire to eliminate, sleep, or roll over at night due to poor circulation). Of course, these demands can be temporarily repressed using medication, but not indefinitely. Most people have experienced this, even if they don't have e-brains. Even when we're completely engrossed in video games, books, talking or creating something, sleep or hunger or poor circulation have the ability to interrupt what we're doing. At last for me. And you...?

Motoko has apparently been processing the signals coming from her leg and deceiving her own senses to think that her right leg is really a cylinder. By doing so, in cyberspace her leg has the sensation (visual and tactile) that it is a cylinder, but in reality, as shown in the above panel, it's of course just functioning as a leg, and is perceived as such. This gives her a quick way to tell if she is in fact in "reality" and not simply another iteration of cyberspace. (Doesn't sound very believable, does it...?)

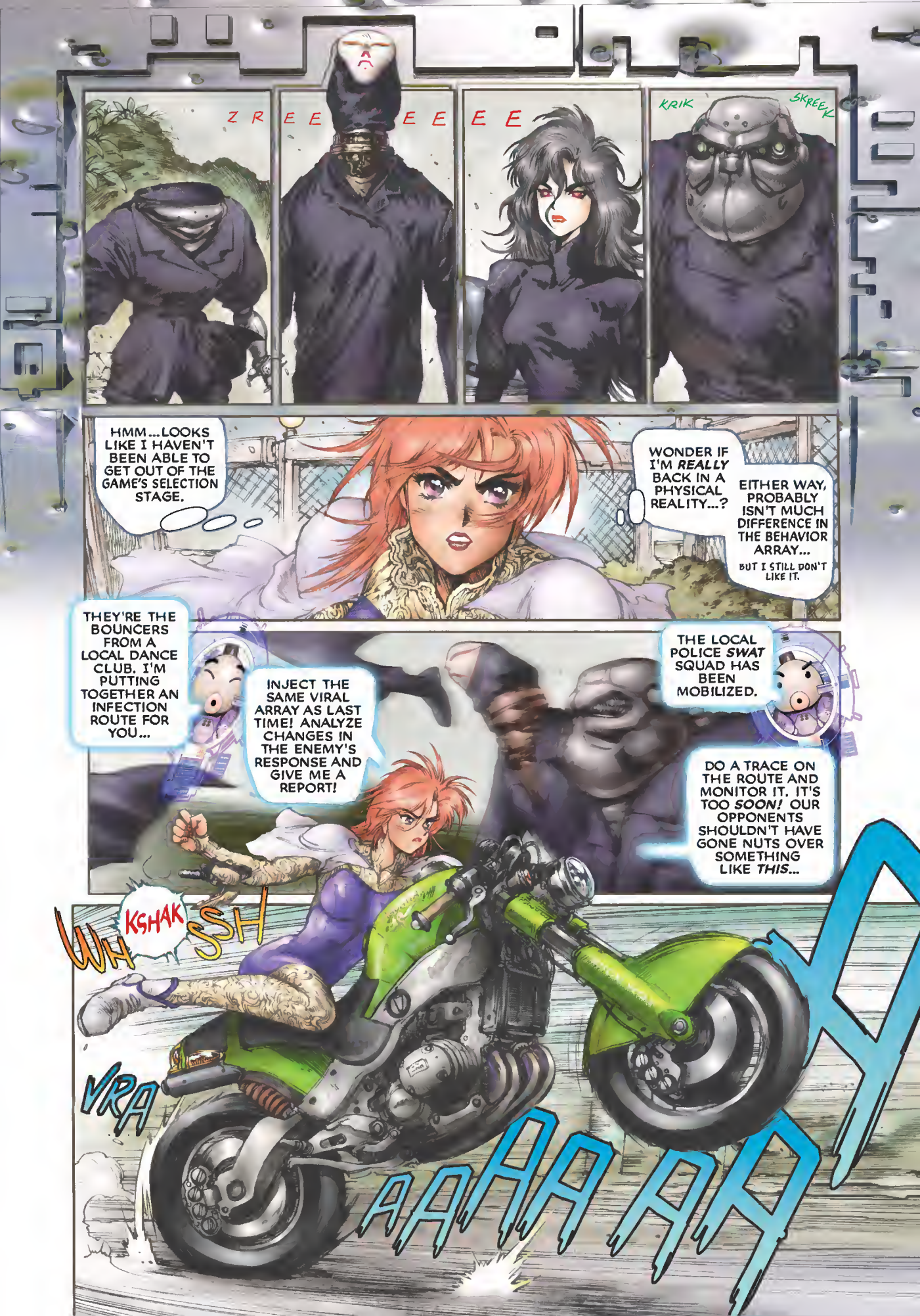
VREEEEE
FHIT
FHIT FHIT
WHA-
WHAT THE HELL?!
WHSSH
GO FOR THE EXIT! ON THE RIGHT!
SKSSH
SPLSH
HEY, THIS ISN'T THE EXIT!
WHERE IS SHE?!
CLEAR THE STAGE! THE BUG'S COMING!
KANG
KSHAK
AAH!! SHIT!!

WE'VE BEEN BLOCKED! THE PROGRAM'S NOT EXECUTING!
AUGGH!
SCREW THE PROGRAM! KILL THE BUG!!
END
UMPH!
WMP
EDD
KTAK
HEY--THE PROGRAM'S CYCLING!
WHOA... MY BITE WOUNDS HAVE DISAPPEARED!
OKAY... EVERYBODY TAKE A DIFFERENT BRANCH GATE!
HUH?! THIS IS THE SAME AS BEFORE!
SOMEONE CHANGE THE DAMN PROGRAM! HURRY!!
AIEE!!
HERE, TOO!
SPLSH
SKSSH
THUNK
KNNGG
SPLRSH
BLUB
SLRRK

SURE IS TAKING A LONG TIME FOR A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION...
YEAH... IT'S A NEW RECORD.
YOU DON'T SUPPOSED THEY WERE FRIED BY AN ATTACK BARRIER, DO YOU?
IF I'VE BEEN TRACED AND SURROUNDED, MAKE SURE I'M OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE YOU START SHOOTING, OKAY?
HEY, I THOUGHT YOU ASKED FOR THIS JOB TO BE DONE 'CAUSE YOU BELIEVED IN THE BOSS'S ABILITY TO INVESTIGATE AND INFILTRATE.
IF I HAD *100%* FAITH, I WOULDN'T BE HERE IN A BODY-TERMINAL SURROGATE.
JUST A *DIRECT CONNEC-TION.*
YOUR BOSS IS USING A DEFENSE ARRAY *I* PUT TOGETHER, SO WHEN THERE'S A COUNTER-ATTACK IT'LL BE EASIER TO FIND OUT WHO THE ENEMY IS. YOU KNEW THAT, RIGHT...?
BK-!
ROOM


RMMB
RMBB
TRMMMBB
KRAKK
MAMA! MAMA! THE PEOPLE UPSTAIRS--
HUSH! IT'S NONE OF OUR BUSINESS!
BUT MAMA! THE WALLS ARE--
UH OH...
WHAT TH--?! BOSS?!
THEY'VE BRAINJACKED HIM. YOU BETTER NOT TRY TO COMMUNICATE!
BOMF
PSSHT
SSHHH
VREEE
GCHNK
WONDER IF THE SAMPLE I HANDED OVER HAS BEEN TAKEN CARE OF...?
MAYBE I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE... THINGS AREN'T LOOKING GOOD...

!
OH, MISS CHROMA!
?!
WE JUST HAD A SUDDEN BARRIER INTERRUPT FROM AN UNKNOWN AI!!
I'M GIVING THIS BACK TO YOU. I'M SORRY, BUT WE CAN'T ACCEPT YOUR REQUEST FOR AN INVESTIGATION AFTER ALL.
I SEE.
≠ HMPH ≠. SO THAT PIG WITH THE GLASSES AND THE BOX-HEAD WAS REALLY A PLANT, EH? A TERMINAL...
BUT THIS BOY'S PROBABLY NOT REAL, EITHER...
NOW I HAVE TO LEAVE.
YOU HAVE SOME VISITORS WHO HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ME...
VRMBB
BMBB BMBB BMBB


ZREEEEEE
KRIK
SKREEK
HMM...LOOKS LIKE I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET OUT OF THE GAME'S SELECTION STAGE.
WONDER IF I'M *REALLY* BACK IN A PHYSICAL REALITY...?
EITHER WAY, PROBABLY ISN'T MUCH DIFFERENCE IN THE BEHAVIOR ARRAY...
BUT I STILL DON'T LIKE IT.
THEY'RE THE BOUNCERS FROM A LOCAL DANCE CLUB. I'M PUTTING TOGETHER AN INFECTION ROUTE FOR YOU...
INJECT THE SAME VIRAL ARRAY AS LAST TIME! ANALYZE CHANGES IN THE ENEMY'S RESPONSE AND GIVE ME A REPORT!
THE LOCAL POLICE *SWAT* SQUAD HAS BEEN MOBILIZED.
DO A TRACE ON THE ROUTE AND MONITOR IT. IT'S TOO *SOON!* OUR OPPONENTS SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE NUTS OVER SOMETHING LIKE *THIS*...
WH
KSHAK
SH
VRA
AAAA

PHUT
PHUT
KBOOM

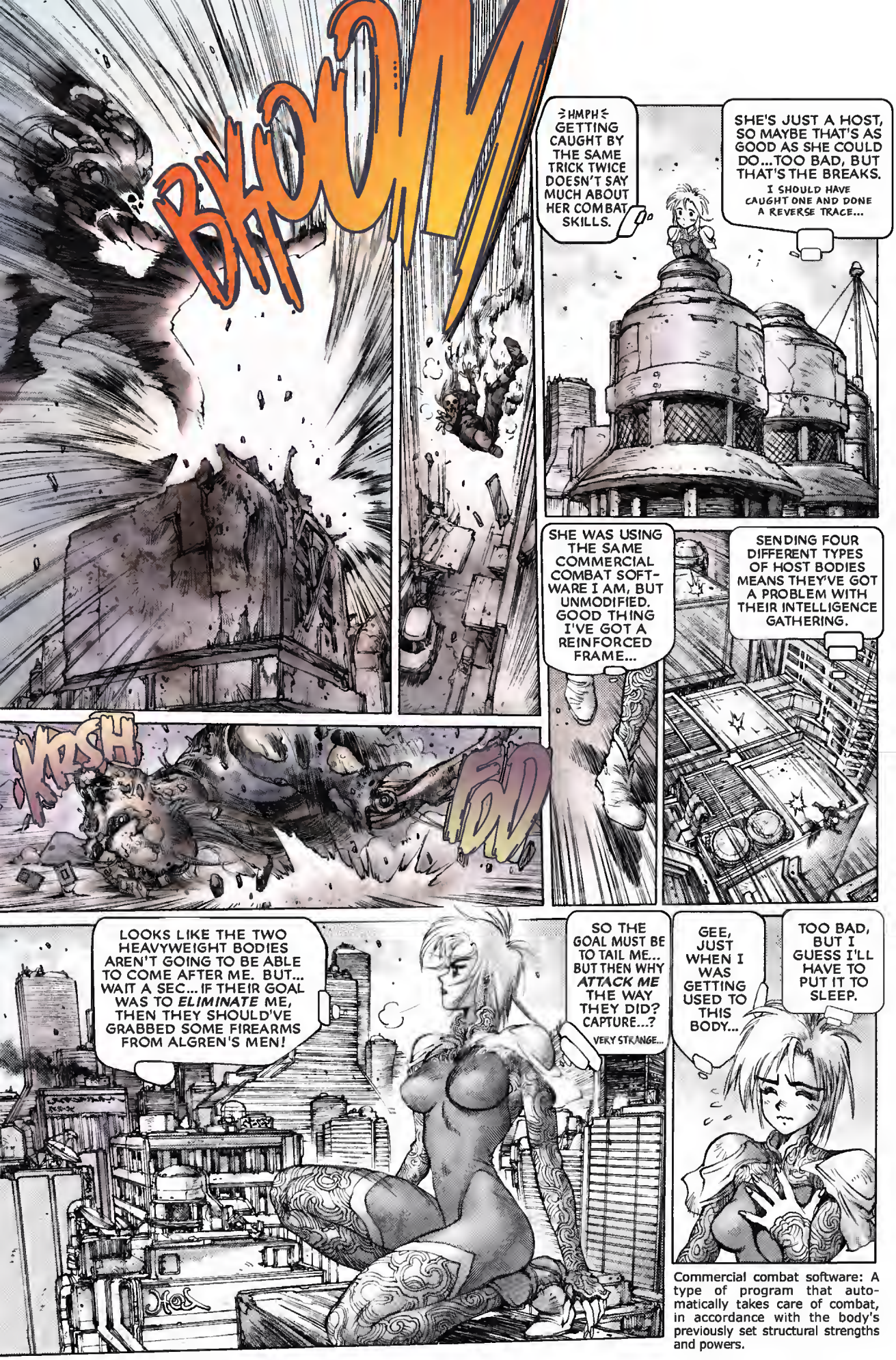
WHOOOSH
FOOOM
THAP
!
KRR
WSSH
CHUCK

WHEW!
FWUMP
WHEW!
FDD
FWHTT
THAPP
FOOOOOM

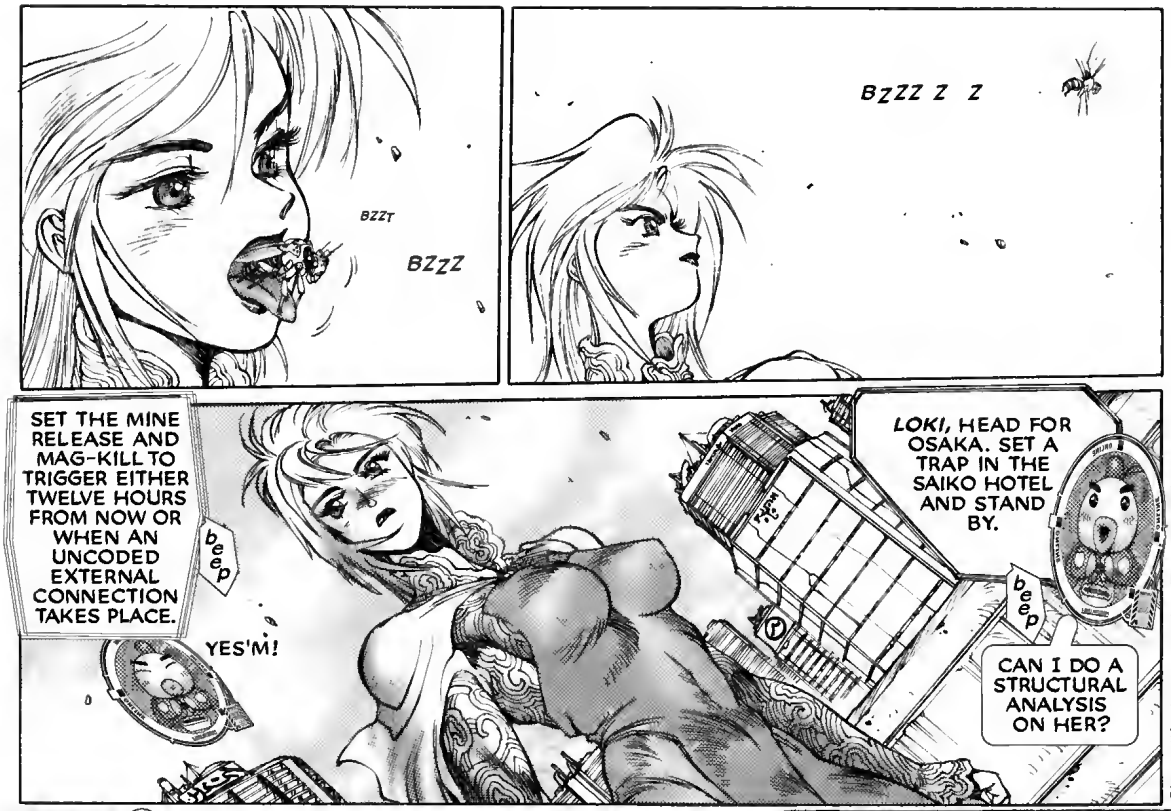
Chroma is a remote-controlled humanoid terminal, so she doesn't need to close her eyes when she takes a hit or exhale when she kicks someone. She's just imitating the reactions of the person operating her, but the reactions have no particular meaning for her.

KRAK
KRIK
HNG!

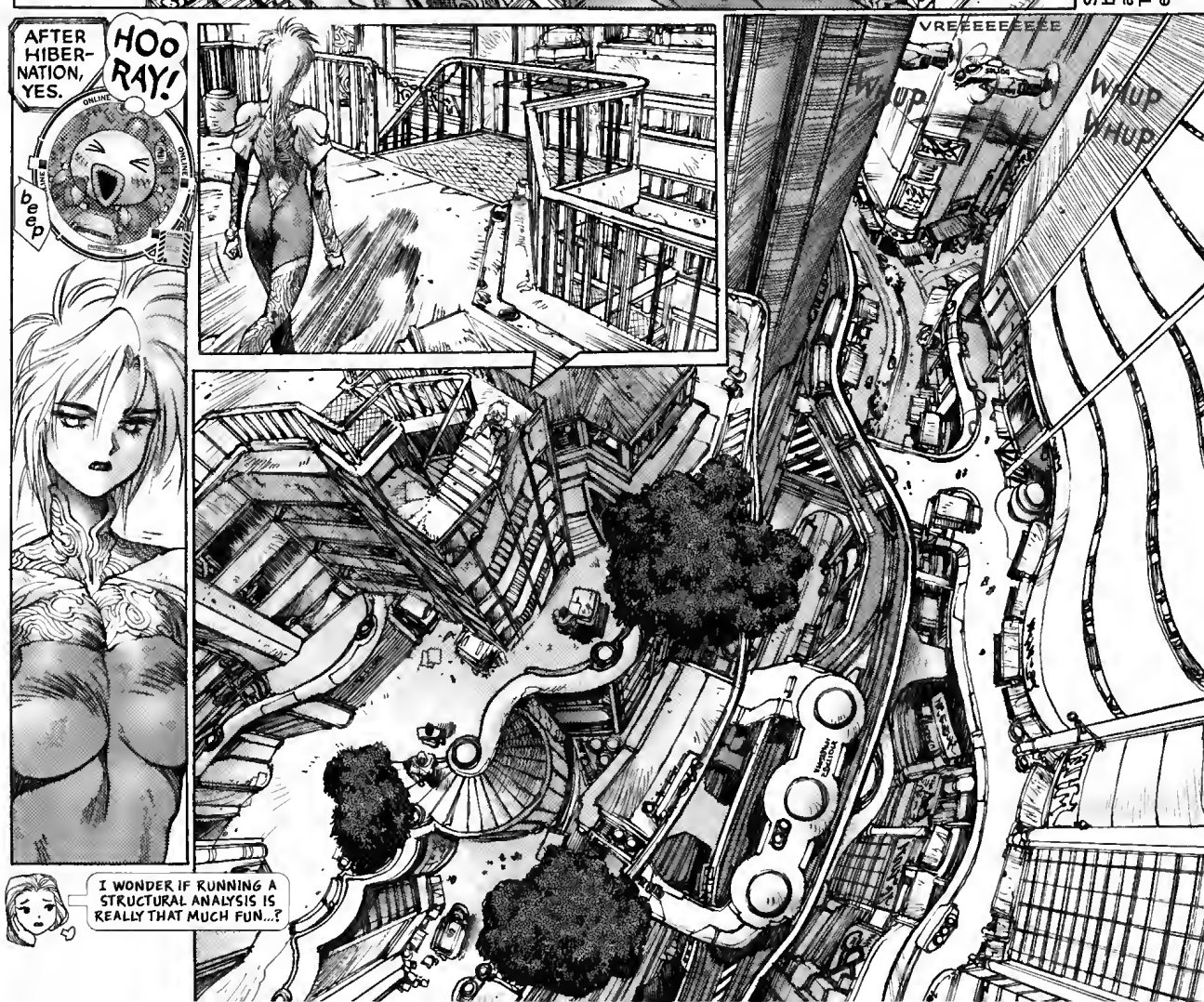
FLASH
FFHT
BOOM
THAP
WHSSH
FZZK
ZZK
KSSH
beep
!




Commercial combat software: A type of program that automatically takes care of combat, in accordance with the body's previously set structural strengths and powers.




Since it's just to gain time, anywhere would be fine. Motoko has a stock of cars available and rooms she periodically secures in hotels. This will allow her to activate Chroma around eight hours later as a decoy.



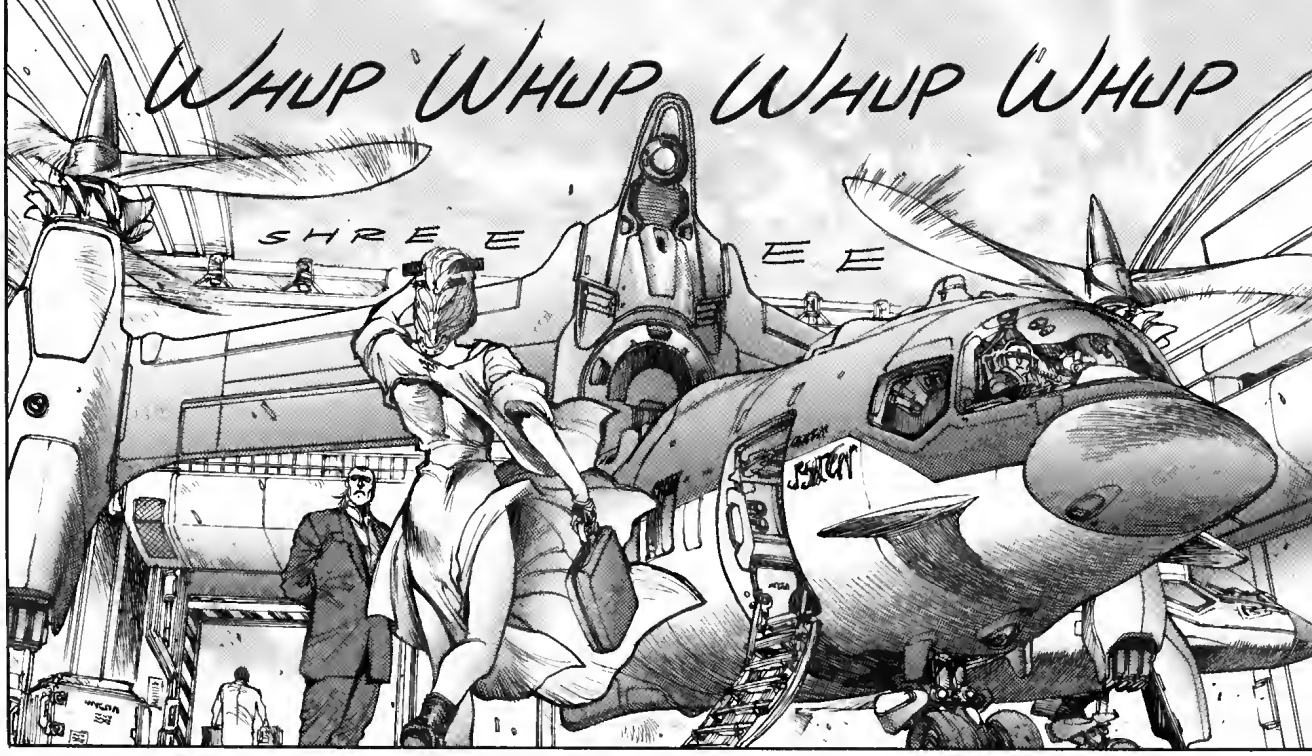
BZZZ
BZZZ
BZZZ
BZZZ
Passing through greenery is a good way to throw larger pursuers off track. The heavier the growth, the easier it is to lose them, but you have to move fast.
SPLSH
MAKE SURE YOU WASH YOUR WINGS AND FEET WELL!
WHEW!
BRRTTT
HM...?!

The "sealing process" used here is the same type used on the building in the opening scene of *Ghost the Shell 1*. Most windows are coated with thin-matrix displays and use random-vibration jamming, so infrared sensors and laser listening devices are generally useless for eavesdropping. The degree of randomness in jamming can be deduced from the movement of the displayed images on the inside of the glass (reflections of trees moving in the wind, and of water, are common). These windows can also function as antennae, so one has to be very careful.

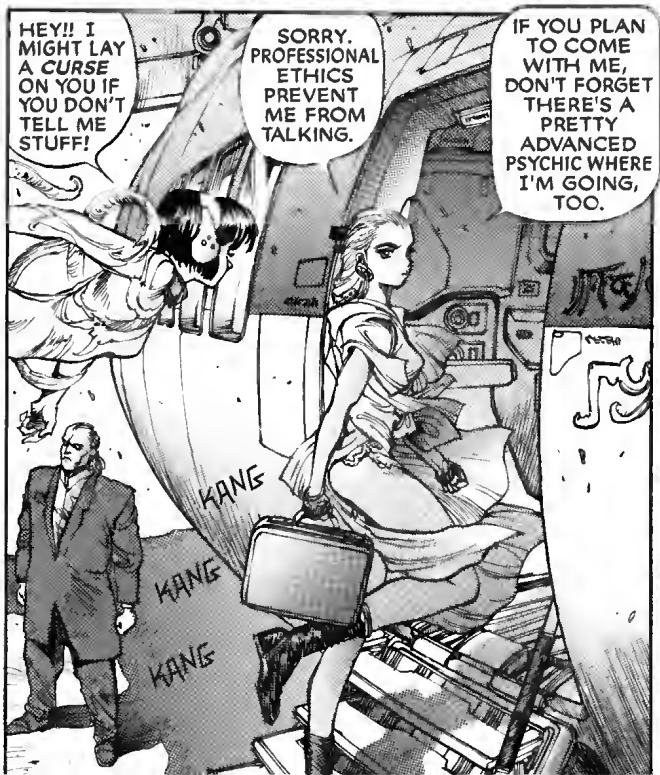
Channeling Agency: A secret organ of the State. Normally it helps suppress the scale of earthquakes and other disasters with feng shui, etc., or it is employed to psychically back up meetings with foreign VIPs. Among those who know of its existence, it's regarded as a very questionable agency....

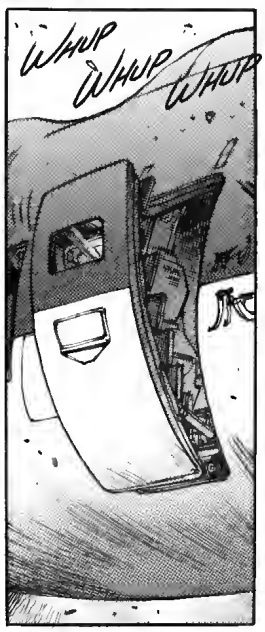
HOW COME A "MERE CIVILIAN" LIKE YOU KNOWS ABOUT THE CHANNELING AGENCY AND HAS A DIRECT LINE INTO PUBLIC SECURITY'S SECTION 9...?
MAYBE YOU'VE GOT A SERIOUS MALFUNCTION?
NOT ME. MAINTENANCE AT 100%.
AND STRICTLY SPEAKING, WHAT YOU'RE REFERRING TO IS NOT ME.
FINE TUNED, TOO.
?
?
?
HMM... NOT SURE I GET ALL THIS... .....
SO JUST WHAT IS YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THIS CASE, ANYWAY?
"CASE"...? WHAT CASE?
I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW. IF YOU'RE JUST KILLING TIME, SCRAM BEFORE IT GETS LITERAL.
KCHIK
GEE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TALK TO ME LIKE THAT!
ACK!
WHSHAK
TEE HEE!
IT'S WHAT EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT, ISN'T IT?
THE CYBER-DOME "STABAT MATER" CASE.
NEVER HEARD OF IT.
MAYBE THERE'S SOME MISUNDER-STANDING AT THE AGENCY...?
CHIK

AND FRANKLY, I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THE CYBERDOME. I THINK IT'S *STUPID*.
KCHAK
*NO WAY!* IT CAN BE REALLY FASCINATING!
YOU *REALLY* THINK IT'S FUN FOR ALL THE SPECTATORS TO DO AN E-BRAIN TRANSFER INTO THE HERO-PROGRAMS IN THE SOFTWARE STORYLINE AND ALL SHARE THE SAME EXPERIENCE?
TOO SOCIALIST FOR *ME*, THANKS.
BUT THEY'RE ALL FUSING BY *CONSENT*. AND... IF I TOLD YOU THE *STABAT MATER* STAFF HAD HIJACKED THE FOUR PEOPLE YOU MET EARLIER, WOULD YOU BE MORE INTERESTED...?
NOT REALLY.
NOW IT'S *YOUR* TURN TO CHAT. WHAT WERE YOU DOING THERE, ANYWAY?
b-beep!
SWITCHING TO HOUSE GUARD MODE. *BREEEP*
WHO SAID WE WERE GOING TO *EXCHANGE* INFORMATION ...?
ME!!
IF YOU REFUSE I WON'T HELP YOU! AND YOU'LL *NEED* MY HELP!
Heh heh heh!
IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE "DEAD LITTLE PIGS" STORY, THEN I DON'T MIND.
VWHSSHH
NOW, THAT'S NOT THE SORT OF CASE THE CHANNELING AGENCY WOULD SEND *ME* FOR!

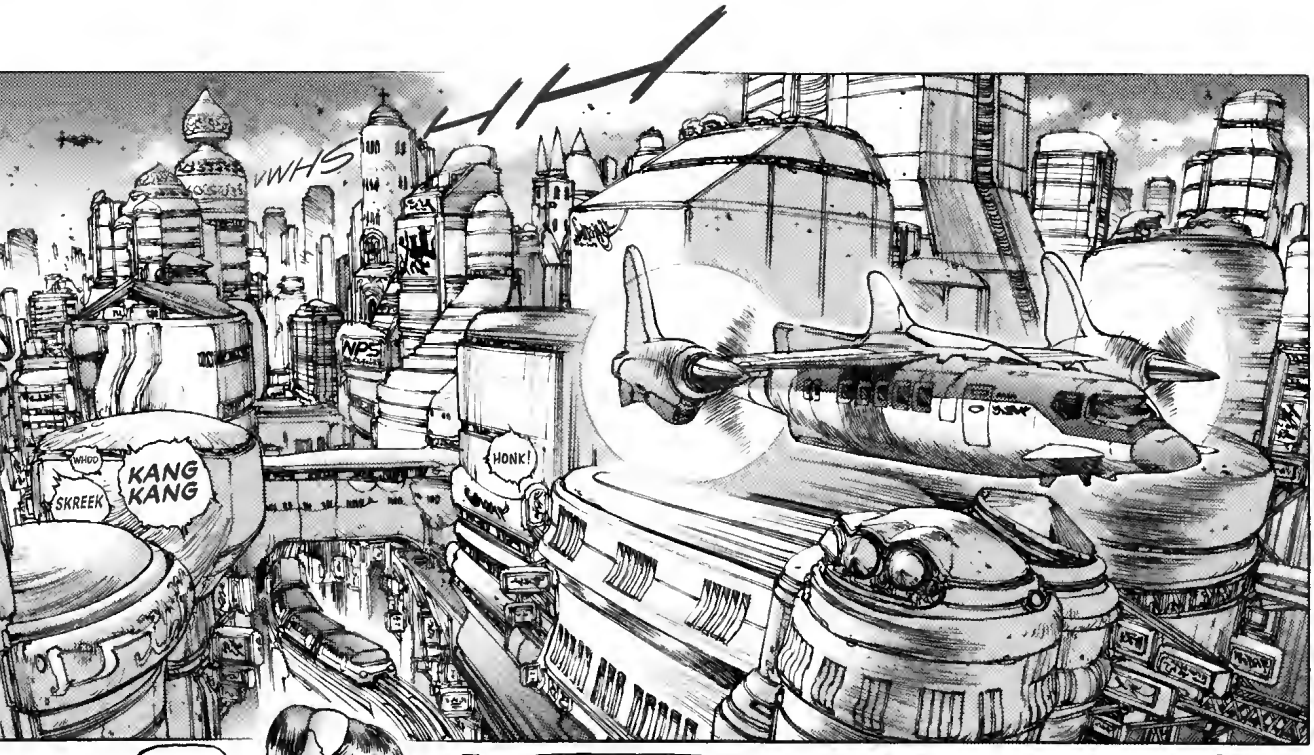


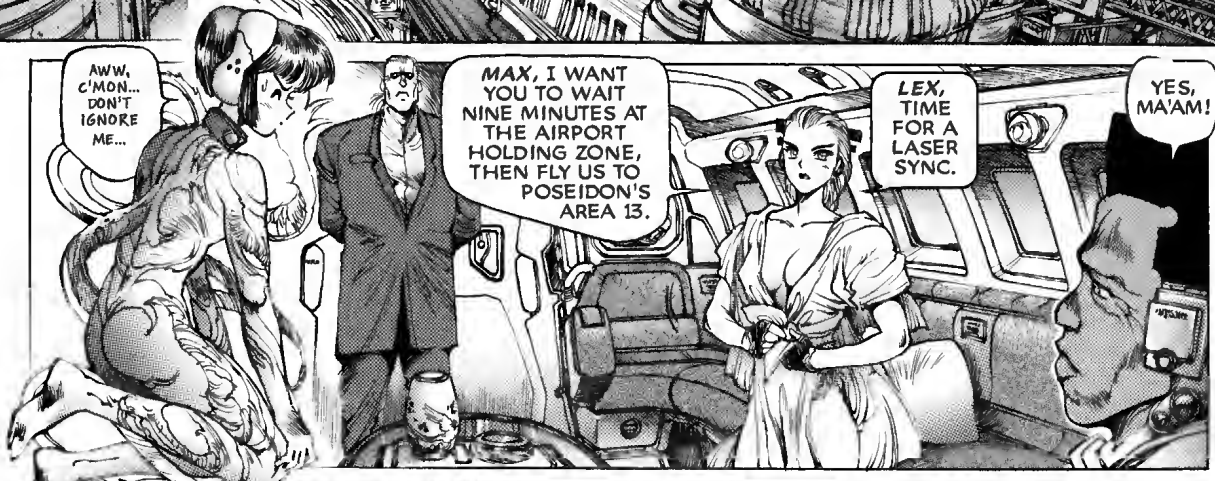
Let's assume that Motoko and Tamaki's conversation is actually all mental and therefore inaudible.

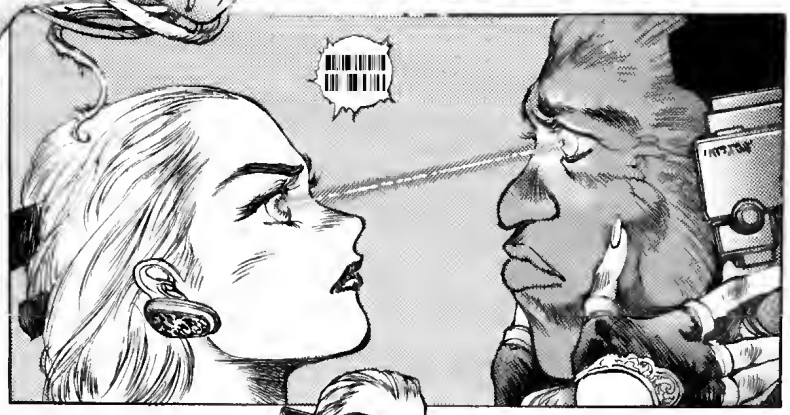




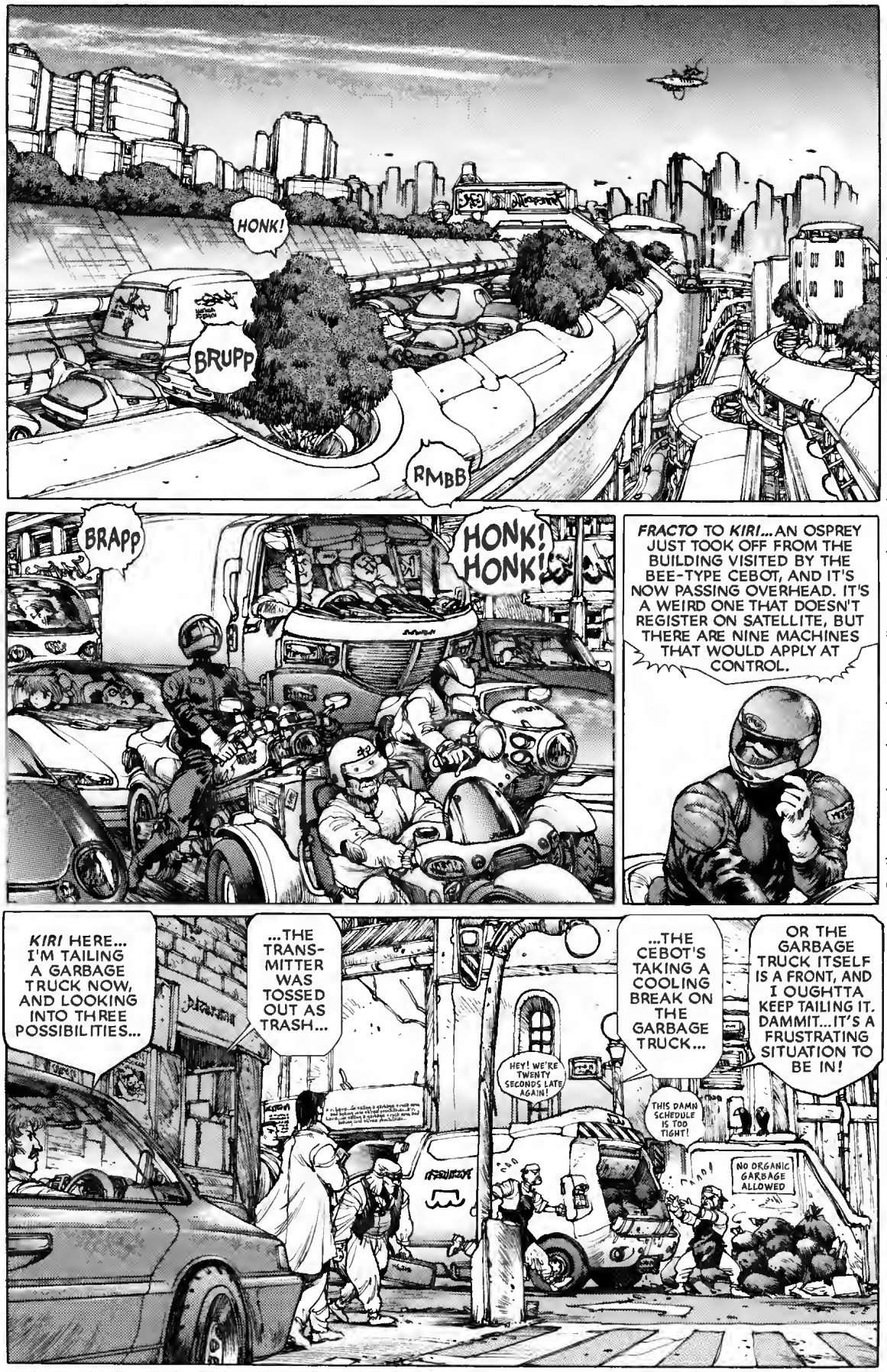

The aircraft shown here is not actually a helicopter, but a tilt-rotor. In our story it's used for business and public service missions much more commonly than light aircraft or helicopters. At least that's the idea....



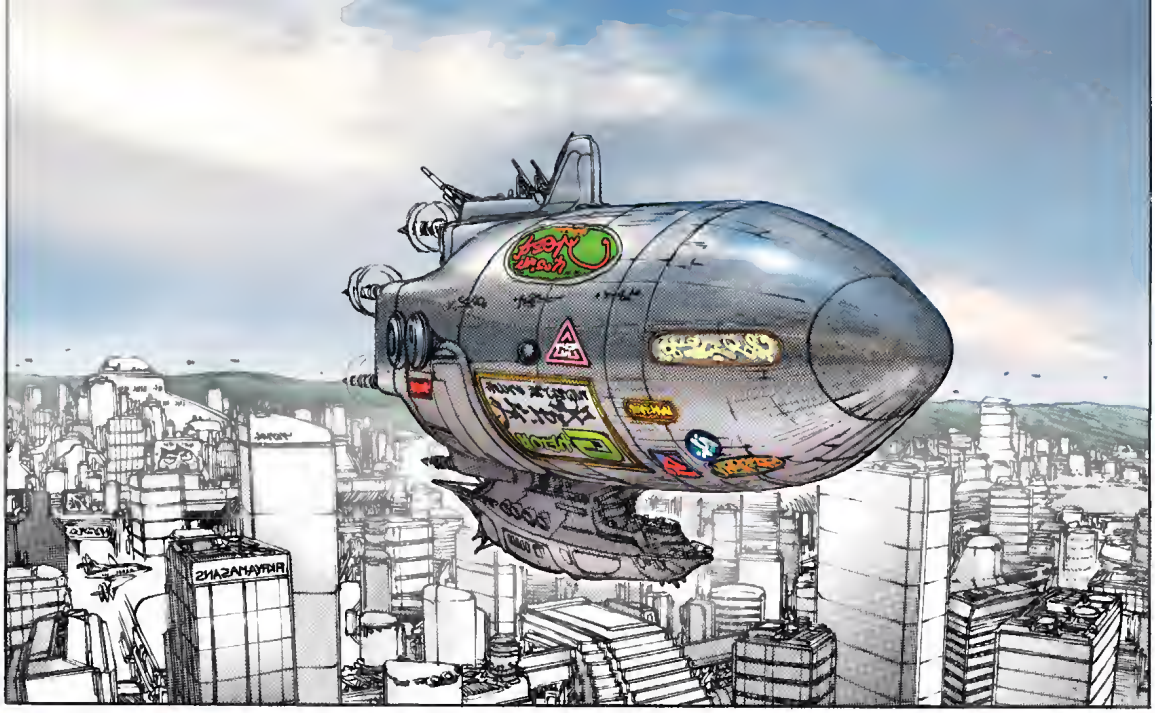
In reality the laser comms light wouldn't be visible unless there was a lot of smoke or dust in the room. (The transmitter revolves along with the vision system.)

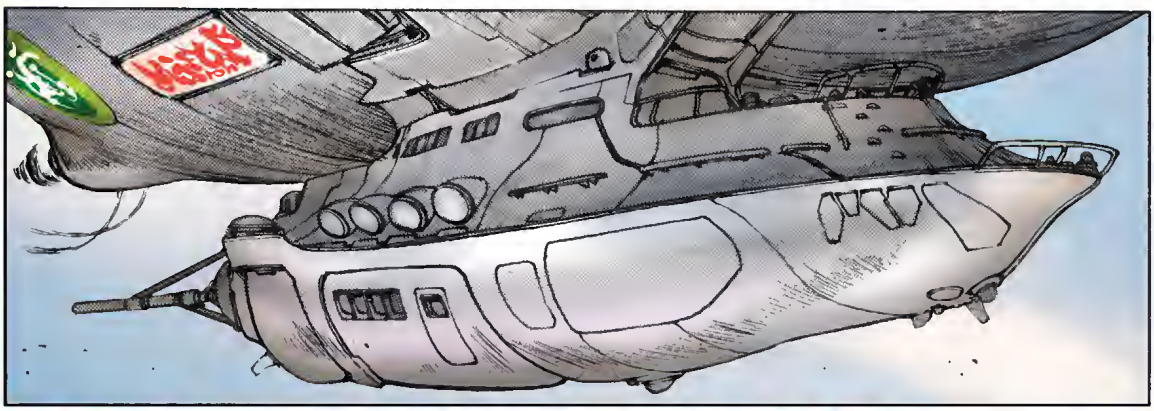



In the second panel on the preceding page, they wait nine minutes at the airport before heading to another destination because they want to throw off anyone trying to monitor, pursue, or tail them. Unless an individual aircraft can be directly detected via satellite or radar, it can be hard to distinguish from a distance, as many small aircraft use the airport. Obviously, they're not going to fly directly to the airport, either—they'll go in a round-about way to throw any pursuers off track.

A cebot is a "centimeter class" robot. It's usually anything from one to ten centimeters. As in the case of Motoko's bumblebee, many cebots are built to look like insects. Cebots are used to eliminate insect pests or clean sewers and usually operate in swarms (aka "insectrons"). Cebots are a product of nanotechnology, but they're too big to be referred to as nanomachines or micromachines.

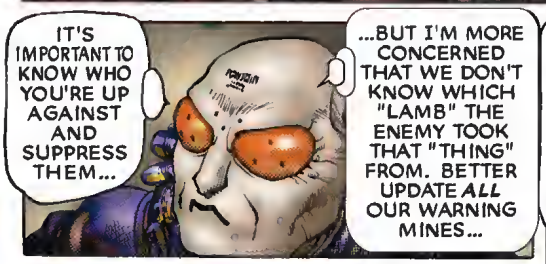
WELL, I JUST GOT A READOUT FROM THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT-- BOTH TRUCK AND WORKERS ARE APPARENTLY THE REAL THING.
USE THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT'S LINES TO TELL THE MEN TO FINISH COLLECTING GARBAGE AND TO HEAD FOR THE INCINERATOR PLANT, THEN LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO THE TRANSMITTER SIGNAL.
OKAY. CHROMA GAVE THE "THING" TO THE DETECTIVE, ANYWAY, SO I'LL LEAVE THE REST OF THE TAILING UP TO YAMAZO.
I'LL DIS-ENGAGE HERE AND GO REPORT TO MOTHER...
BRMBB
RMMBB
FHHTTT
WHAT TH--?
?!?
WH... WHAT AM I DOING HERE? WHERE AM I?!
WHOA... WATCH OUT FOR THAT GUY!
JNT

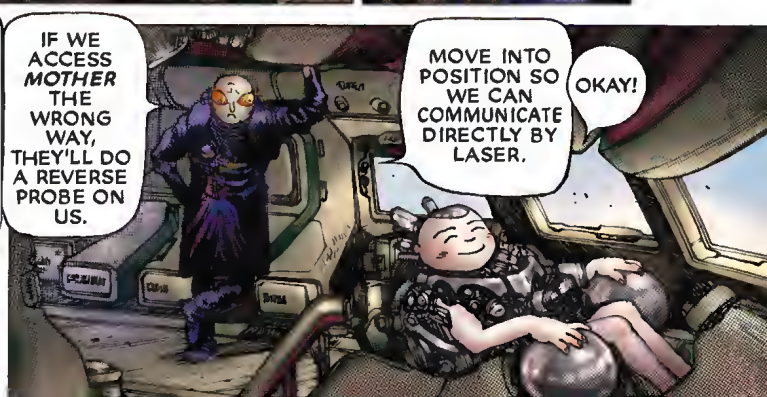


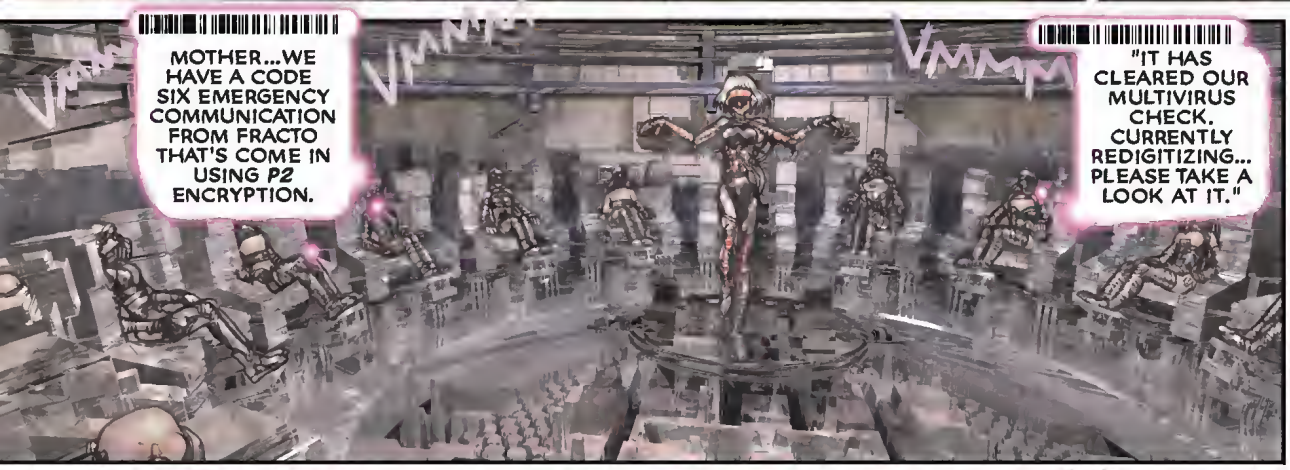


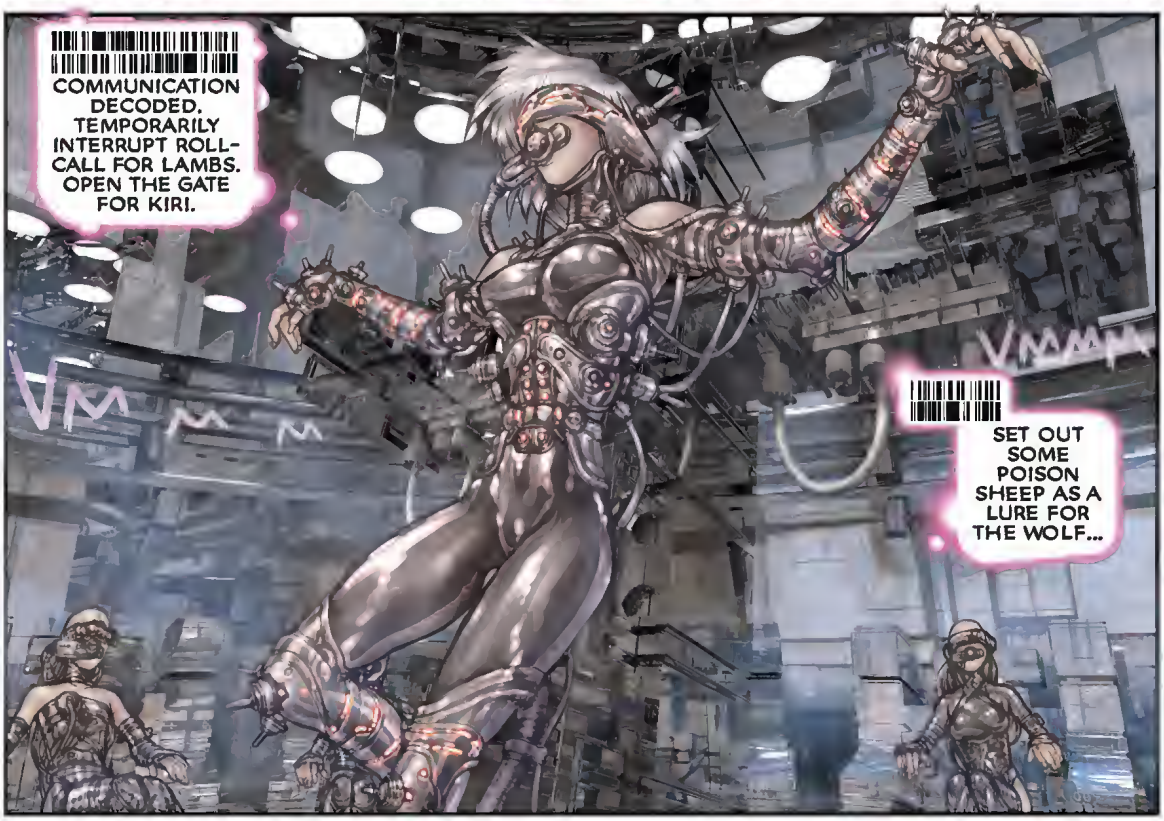
HA!

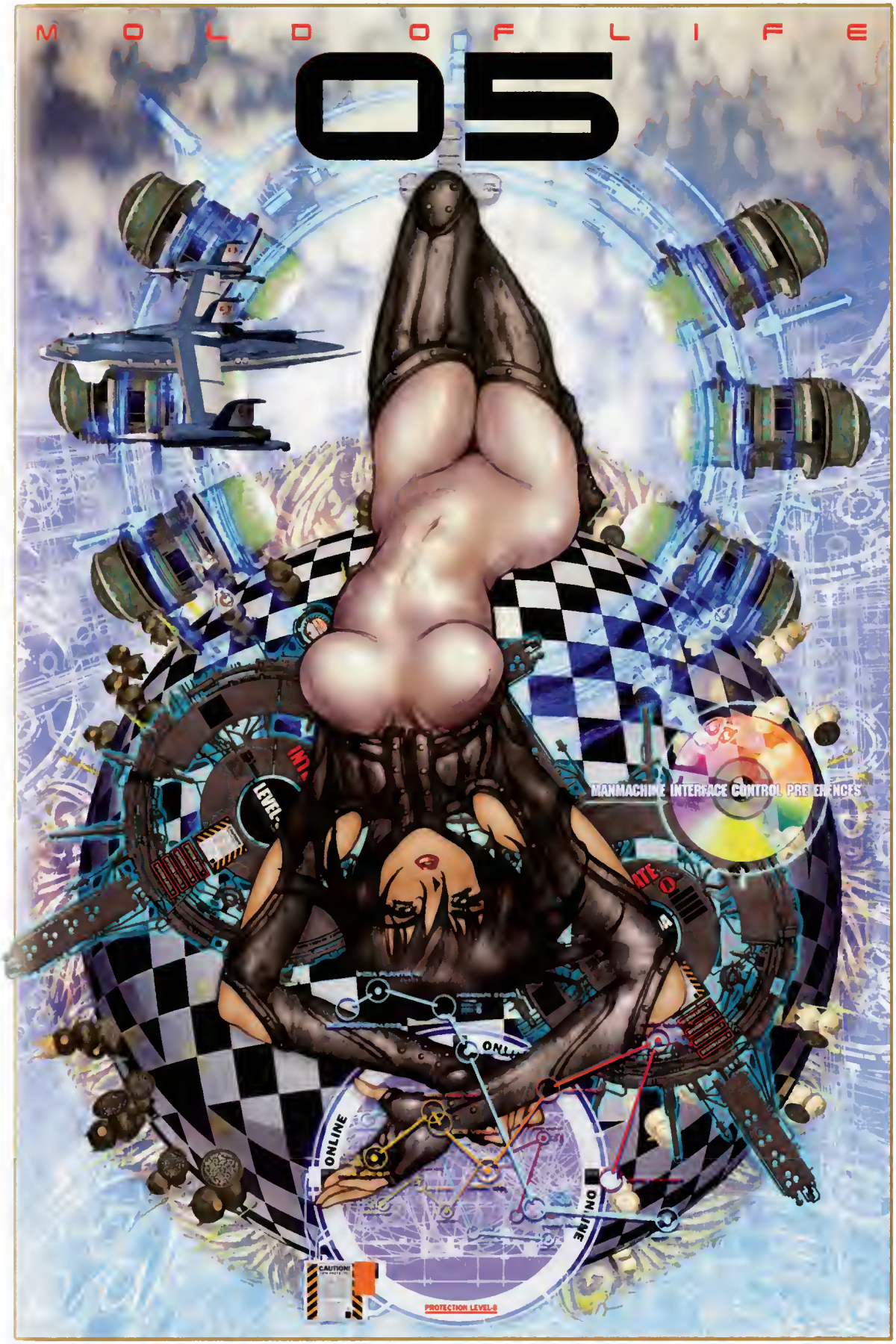
TOO BAD WE DON'T HAVE MORE PEOPLE.


IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHO YOU'RE UP AGAINST AND SUPPRESS THEM...
...BUT I'M MORE CONCERNED THAT WE DON'T KNOW WHICH "LAMB" THE ENEMY TOOK THAT "THING" FROM. BETTER UPDATE *ALL* OUR WARNING MINES...


IF WE ACCESS *MOTHER* THE WRONG WAY, THEY'LL DO A REVERSE PROBE ON US.
MOVE INTO POSITION SO WE CAN COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY BY LASER.
OKAY!


MOTHER...WE HAVE A CODE SIX EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION FROM FRACTO THAT'S COME IN USING P2 ENCRYPTION.
"IT HAS CLEARED OUR MULTIVIRUS CHECK. CURRENTLY REDIGITIZING... PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT IT."


COMMUNICATION DECODED. TEMPORARILY INTERRUPT ROLL-CALL FOR LAMBS. OPEN THE GATE FOR KIRI.
SET OUT SOME POISON SHEEP AS A LURE FOR THE WOLF...

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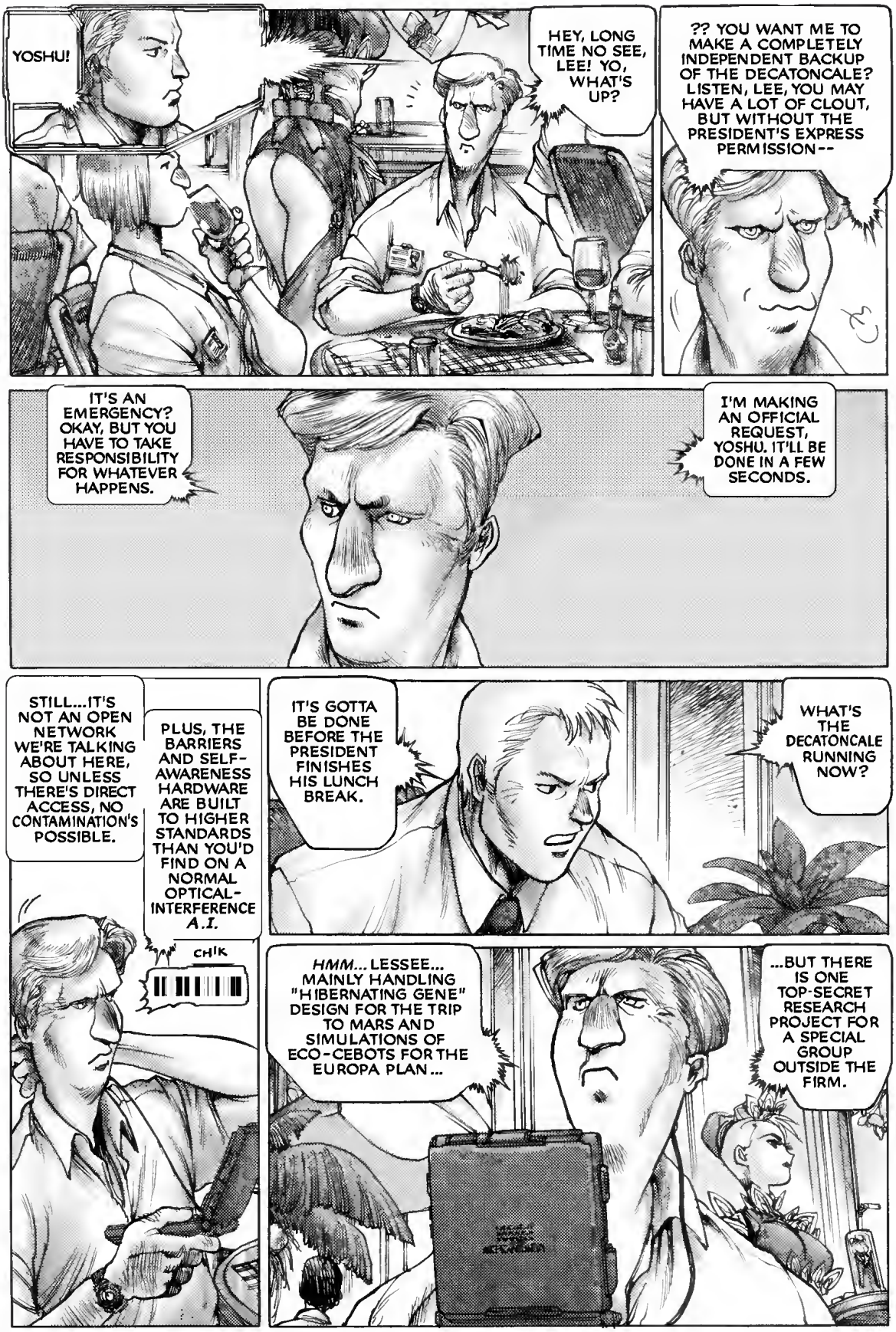
WE'VE CONFIRMED *TAMAKI TAMA!* IS OPERATIVE, BUT DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS...
OH?
WE'RE CERTAIN THERE HASN'T BEEN AN INFILTRATION, BUT WE'RE RECHECKING THE BARRIERS.
I WONDER IF THE ORDER SENT EARLIER TO THE *CHANNELING AGENCY* ORDERING THE AGENCY HEAD TO STEP DOWN DIDN'T WORK...?
I'M GETTING THE IMPRESSION WE'RE DEALING WITH SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE "ULTRA-STRAIGHT" TAMAKI I KNOW...

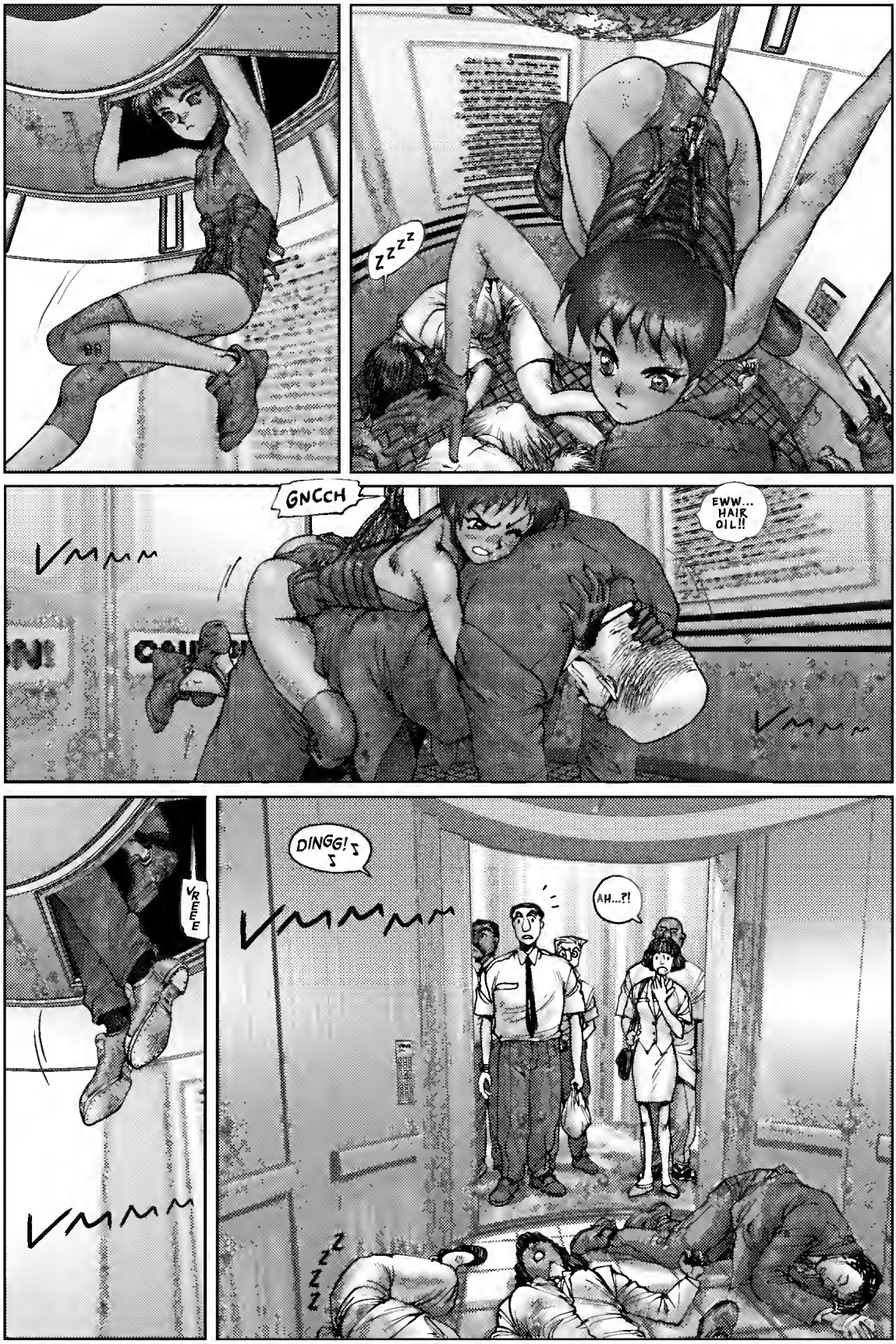
DECATONCALE: Name of a special supercomputer in this story. Only three such systems exist on the planet.
ARACNOSAT: Name of an optical satellite network system. Uses redundant communications lines to ensure throughput.

PERFECT. I *THOUGHT* YOU WERE THE TYPE WHO'D BE CHECKING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS DURING LUNCH!
SO, IN OTHER WORDS... YOU'RE IN A HURRY. RIGHT...?
MUSTA BEEN LOOKING AT MY RESUME...
YUP, I SAW IT.
I NEED TIME ON THE DECATONCALE TO TAKE ON SOME E-THUGS... AND I CAN'T AFFORD ANY COMPETITION FOR *CPU* CYCLES, SO CAN WE CUT A DEAL?
SORRY. EVEN A TOP EXECUTIVE OF THE COMPANY COULDN'T GIVE *YOU*-- PROBABLY THE MOST SUSPECT PERSON IN OUR WHOLE ORGANIZATION--FREE ACCESS TO THE SYSTEM'S CORE FUNCTIONS.
CAN'T YOU COME UP WITH A REQUEST THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL SUPER-COMPUTERS...?
PRETTY PLEASE ...? ♡
SORRY.
YOU BIG MEANIE!
WELL, I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO LEAVE THIS CASE UP TO THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT AND TAKE A PAID VACATION. YOU CAN TAKE OVER FOR ME.
WHATEVER. JUST MAKE SURE YOU SEND ME ALL CURRENT DOCUMENTATION ON THE CASE.
BY THE WAY, HOW COME YOU HAVEN'T MADE A REQUEST TO SECURITY FOR BODYGUARDS? MY REPUTATION AROUND HERE IS GONNA SUFFER.
...
WANNA TALK ABOUT IT OVER DINNER SOMETIME? IT'S FINE WITH ME...SEE YA LATER!
HMM...
DANGEROUS LADY, AIN'T SHE?

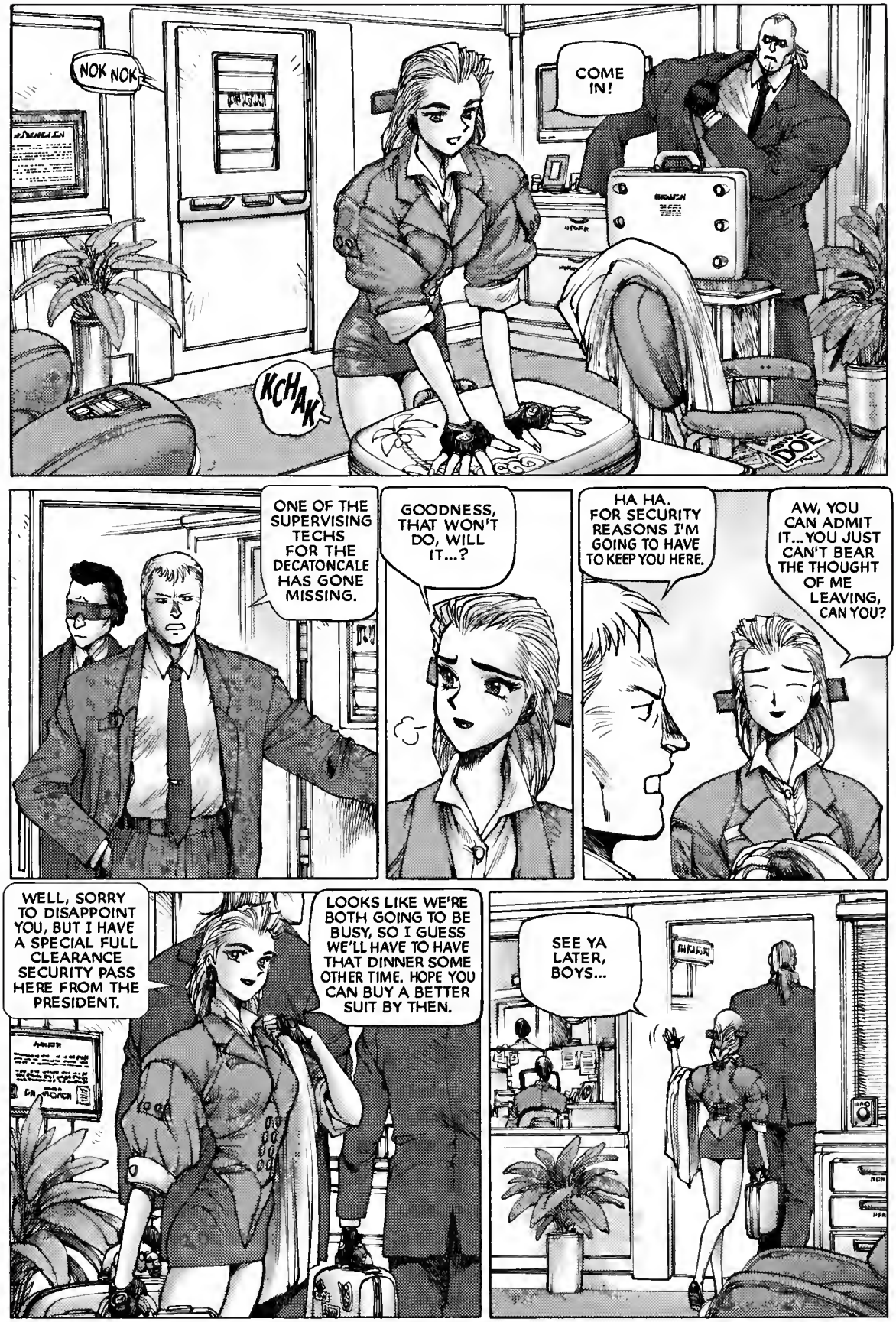
OKAY...I CHECKED WITH *HR.* CASH FLOW IS CLEAN, NO SIGN OF NEPOTISM OR NOTHIN'.
THE DEPARTMENT CHIEF AND FELLA IN CHARGE SECRETLY INVESTIGATED HER. THE OLD EXAMINERS OFFICE COLLECTED ALL THE RELEVANT DOCUMENTS... NOTHIN' SPECIAL.
WELL, SHE MUST HAVE SOME SORT OF EXCEPTIONAL CONNECTIONS, REGARDLESS. I WONDER WHAT KIND OF WORK SHE NORMALLY DOES...?
AT ANY RATE, KEEP GATHERING INFO ON HER. THERE MAY BE SOME DISPUTE GOING ON ABOVE OUR HEADS, SO I WANT YOU TO REPORT TO ME DIRECTLY, WITH AN INDEPENDENT TEAM.
***SHE'S STARTED INPUTTING!*** I CAN'T TELL WHAT SHE'S SAYING 'CAUSE I CAN'T CRACK THE FILES WITH THE TOOLS I'VE GOT.
AND SHE'S CYCLING THROUGH DIFFERENT RELAYS AT AN *INCREDIBLE* SPEED.
AT LEAST TRY TO FIGURE OUT-- OR GUESS-- WHO SHE'S CONNECTING TO.
***HABU!*** I NEED TO KNOW HOW MANY SENIOR RESEARCHERS IN CHARGE OF THE DECATONCALE ARE OFF-SITE NOW.
**MNF?** WELL, IT'S LUNCHTIME NOW, SO PROLLY ABOUT A THIRD. IF YOU WAIT A SEC, I'LL CHECK...
OKAY... TWENTY-EIGHT. WHASSUP?
IT MAY BE A FEINT BY E-THUGS SO DEPARTMENT HEAD ARAMAKI CAN CONNECT TO THE DECATONCALE. MAKE SURE TWO OUT OF THREE OF THE DEDICATED SECURITY TEAMS ARE STAFFED WITH NON-E-BRAIN PERSONNEL.
GOTCHA, BOSS.

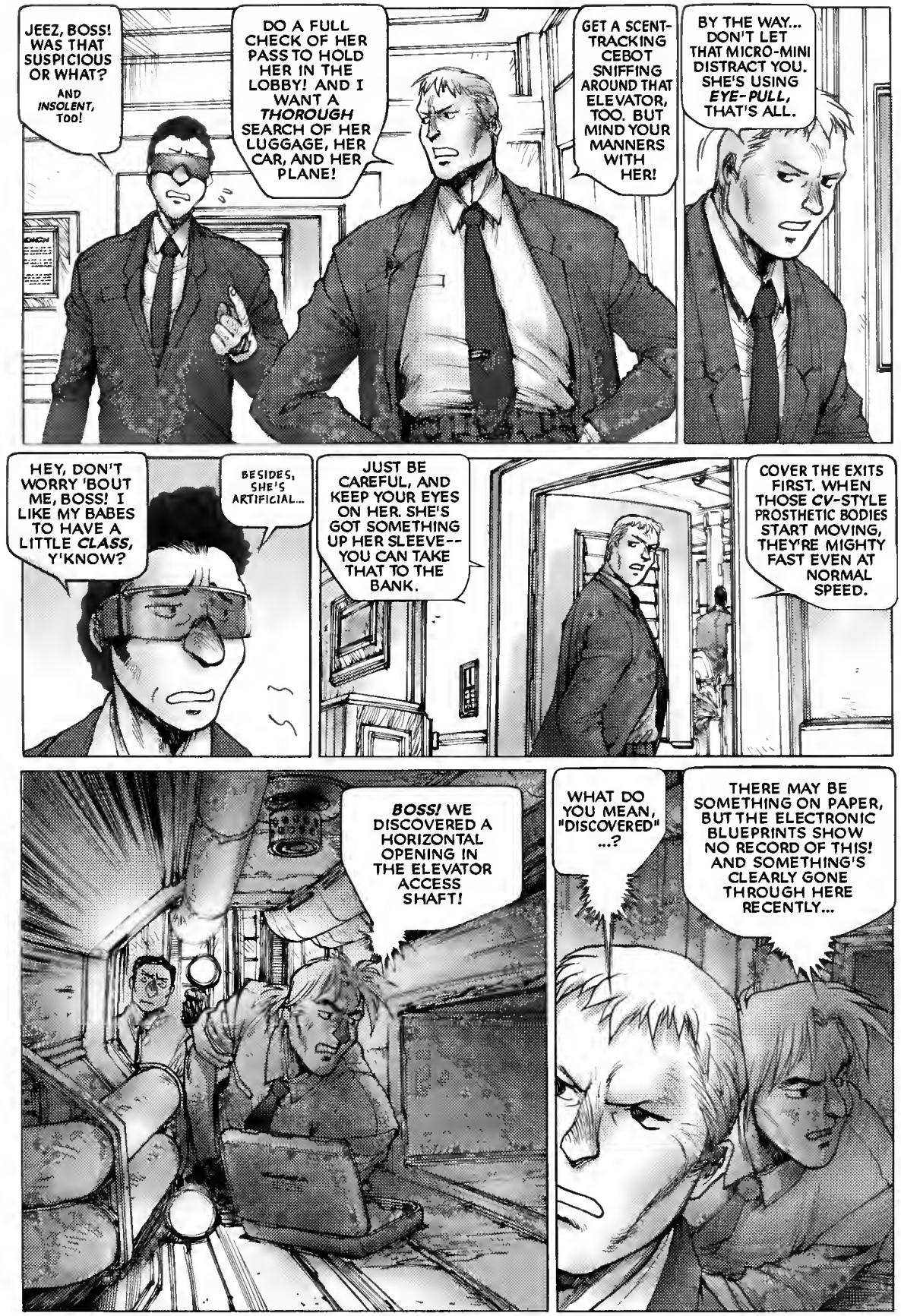

YOSHU!
HEY, LONG TIME NO SEE, LEE! YO, WHAT'S UP?
?? YOU WANT ME TO MAKE A COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT BACKUP OF THE DECATONCALE? LISTEN, LEE, YOU MAY HAVE A LOT OF CLOUT, BUT WITHOUT THE PRESIDENT'S EXPRESS PERMISSION--
IT'S AN EMERGENCY? OKAY, BUT YOU HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHATEVER HAPPENS.
I'M MAKING AN OFFICIAL REQUEST, YOSHU. IT'LL BE DONE IN A FEW SECONDS.
STILL...IT'S NOT AN OPEN NETWORK WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE, SO UNLESS THERE'S DIRECT ACCESS, NO CONTAMINATION'S POSSIBLE.
PLUS, THE BARRIERS AND SELF-AWARENESS HARDWARE ARE BUILT TO HIGHER STANDARDS THAN YOU'D FIND ON A NORMAL OPTICAL-INTERFERENCE A.I.
CHIK
IT'S GOTTA BE DONE BEFORE THE PRESIDENT FINISHES HIS LUNCH BREAK.
WHAT'S THE DECATONCALE RUNNING NOW?
HMM... LESSEE... MAINLY HANDLING "HIBERNATING GENE" DESIGN FOR THE TRIP TO MARS AND SIMULATIONS OF ECO-CEBOTS FOR THE EUROPA PLAN...
...BUT THERE IS ONE TOP-SECRET RESEARCH PROJECT FOR A SPECIAL GROUP OUTSIDE THE FIRM.

Dingg
FSSHH
CAUTION
SNFFS
NGH--
?!
KTAK


ZZZZ
GNCCH
EWW... HAIR OIL!!
VRREE
DINGG!
AH...?!
ZZZZ

OOMPH!
THAP
beep
GCHAK
GCHAK
beep
≥PHEWW≤


NOK NOK
COME IN!
KCHAK
ONE OF THE SUPERVISING TECHS FOR THE DECATONCALE HAS GONE MISSING.
GOODNESS, THAT WON'T DO, WILL IT...?
HA HA. FOR SECURITY REASONS I'M GOING TO HAVE TO KEEP YOU HERE.
AW, YOU CAN ADMIT IT...YOU JUST CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF ME LEAVING, CAN YOU?
WELL, SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, BUT I HAVE A SPECIAL FULL CLEARANCE SECURITY PASS HERE FROM THE PRESIDENT.
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE BOTH GOING TO BE BUSY, SO I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO HAVE THAT DINNER SOME OTHER TIME. HOPE YOU CAN BUY A BETTER SUIT BY THEN.
SEE YA LATER, BOYS...




EYE-PULL: This isn't the name of a high tech device, but a technique such a magician might use. Sort of like a feint in martial arts. It requires using movements or elements that attract attention (in a properly timed fashion), and help to direct attention and short term memory in a specific way. In this case maybe we could call it "sleight of leg."

I've heard about the U.S. army's plans to use more fully equipped infantry and streamline and speed up their mobile armored forces (don't forget to reform the navy and the forces stationed in Japan while you're at it!). Of course, that's mainly for combat operations in different overseas environments, but as I mentioned before, Japan's military could use some major modernizing, too! The navy and the maritime safety agency, in particular, seem to be handicapped by too many concepts that date back to World War II, if you ask me. And you think the current army can really respond to a guerrilla action in an urban environment? That stated, I'd hate to see any swap made that involved the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Japan and a permanent stationing of atomic-powered carriers in the East China Sea.

UM... MS. ARAMAKI? WE'D LIKE YOU TO COME WITH US TO THE SECURITY OFFICE... WE'RE, UH, CHECKING PASSES...
GOODNESS! ON MY FIRST DAY OF VACATION?!
WANT ME TO PERFORM A PSYCHIC DISCONNECT BETWEEN THAT FAT OILY PIG IN THE ELEVATOR EARLIER AND HIS GUARDIAN DEITY?
SURE, IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD... BUT I WON'T THANK YOU FOR ANYTHING I CAN'T VERIFY!
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T ASK FOR A REWARD! IN FOREIGN RELATIONS, IT'S RESULTS THAT COUNT, YES?
YOU GOTTA KEEP IT SECRET, THOUGH!
HEE HEE!
ACTUALLY, LAST MONTH, THE GUARDIAN DEITY OF THE U.S. PRESIDENT'S WIFE WAS--
KEEP IT SECRET, OKAY?
YEESH...THIS CHICK COULD BE A REAL HANDFUL...

MAN, THIS IS THE STORY OF MY LIFE. WON'T I *EVER* GET TO KICK BACK AND RELAX...?
STOP WHINING AND PAY ATTENTION! YOUR FEED IS BREAKING UP SO DON'T COUNT ON ME TO NOTICE EVERYTHING.
WHAT TH--?
WHAT...?
IS THAT A *SPIDER*...?
VREEE!
PHUTT
!
PSSHT
??
HEY, JIM! YOU OKAY? WHAT'S GOING ON?
I CAN'T SEE A DAMN THING! JIM...?
ZZZZZZZZ

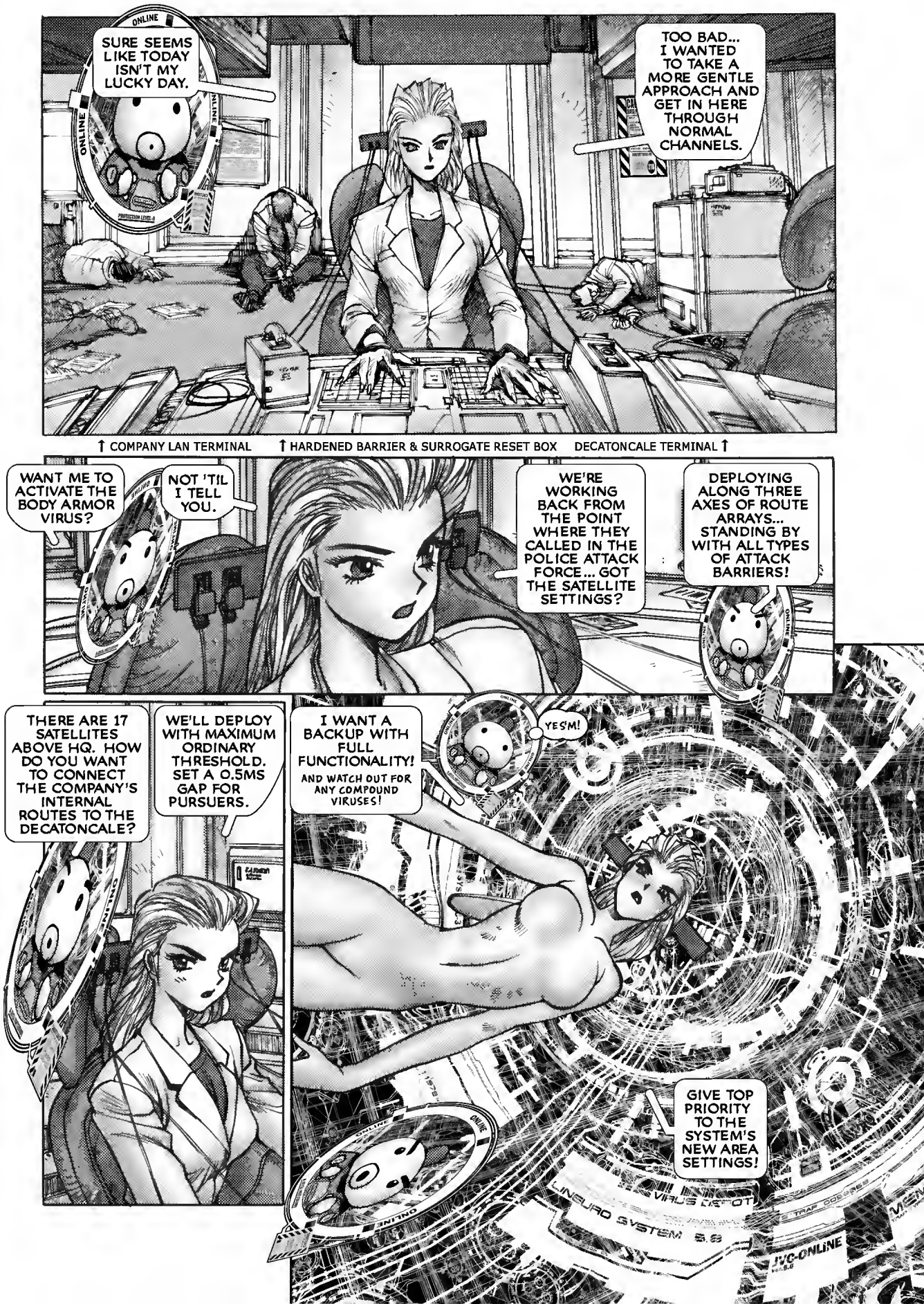
α-C
?!
!
AH...
THD
SIR! MS. ARAMAKI JUST SHOWED UP AT DECATONCALE ACCESS GATEWAY ALPHA-C AND THE SECURITY GUARDS HAVE ALL COLLAPSED! SHALL I SEND PATROLS A15 AND 16 TO THE SITE...?
SAY WHAT?!
GCHAK
FSSHH
HEY, BOSS!
KLIK
EMERGENCY

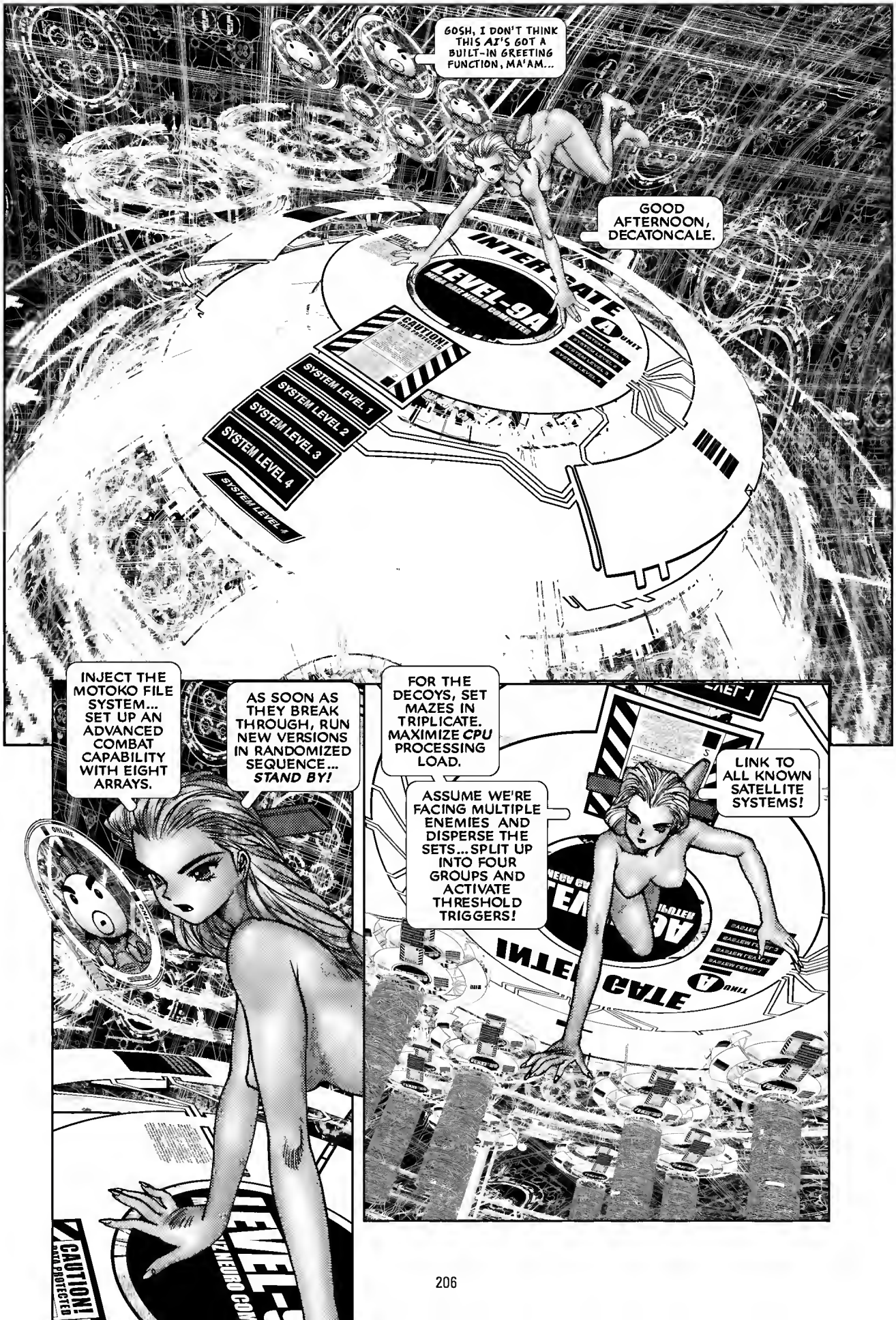
THAT DAMN WOMAN HAS ENTERED THE DECATONCALE CHAMBER!
WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN?
HUH? BUT SIR...I'VE GOT HER HERE RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME!
zzzzzz
WHOOOSHH
WHOOPS... I FORGOT TO TURN OFF THE ALARMS.
KCHAK
beep
b-beep CHIK
FSSHHHHH

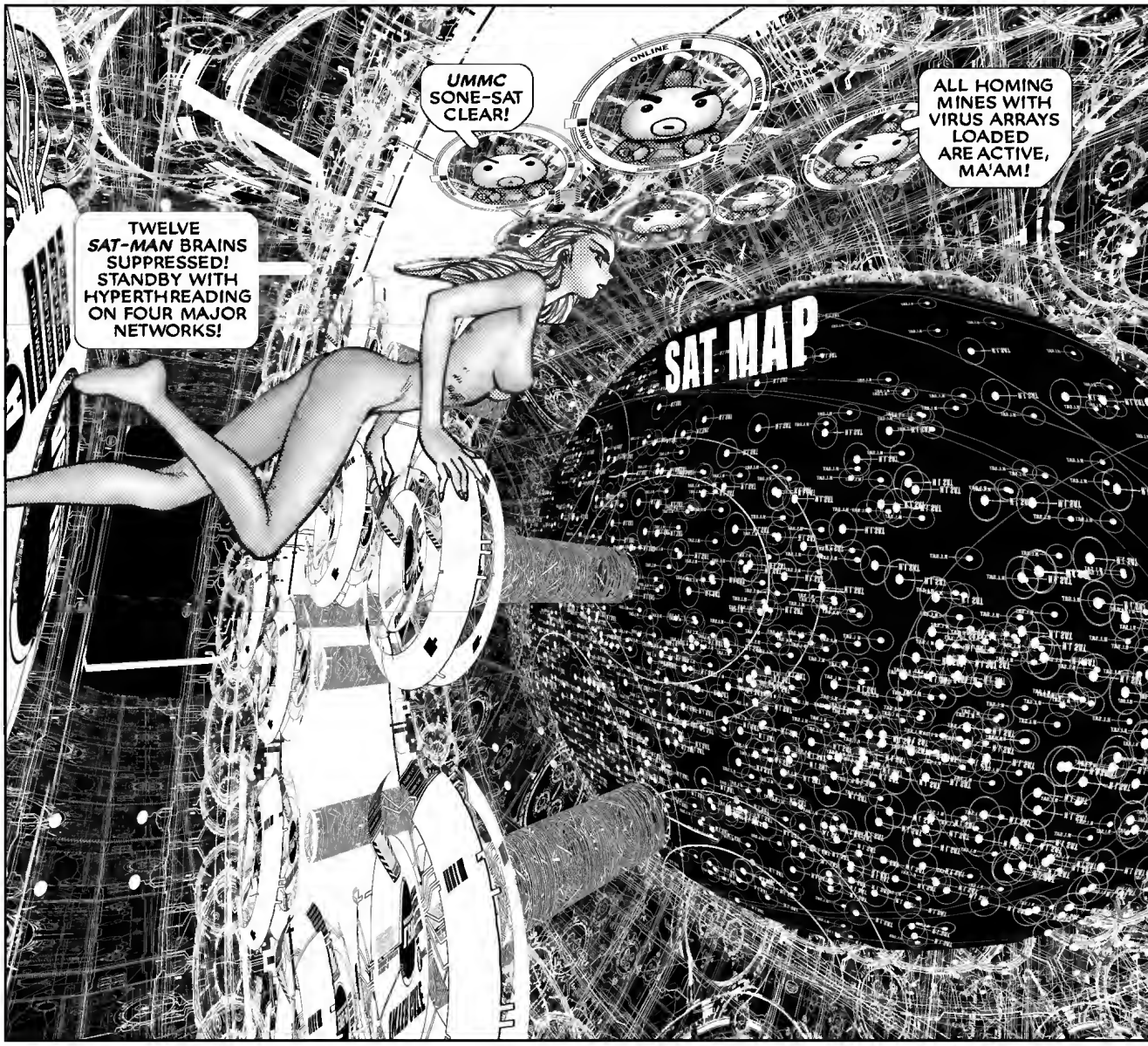
DAMMIT, HABU! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO SWITCH THE SYSTEM OVER TO THE EMERGENCY KEYS!
I DID! I SWEAR!
THAT ROOM DOESN'T USE A DIGITALLY ENCRYPTED KEY--IT'S HARDWARE AND NOT EXACTLY SOMETHING YOU CAN CRACK WITH A COUPLE OF PICKS!
SHE MUST'VE GOTTEN AN EMERGENCY KEY IN ADVANCE!!
SO THE ONLY REASON SHE SNATCHED THE SUPERVISING RESEARCHER WAS TO GET US TO CHANGE THE DAMN KEYS!!
HI, EVERYBODY! 'SCUSE ME...
Z Z Z
Z Z Z
Z Z
Z Z Z Z
WHAT'S WITH THESE PEOPLE? A GROUP NAP?
HOW UNPROFESSIONAL!
IT'S A SPECIAL GAS, PLUS A LATENT VIRUS...I GOT IT FROM THE WAREHOUSE IN WARD SEVEN. MY COMPANY'S PRODUCTS ARE DEFINITELY THE BEST.

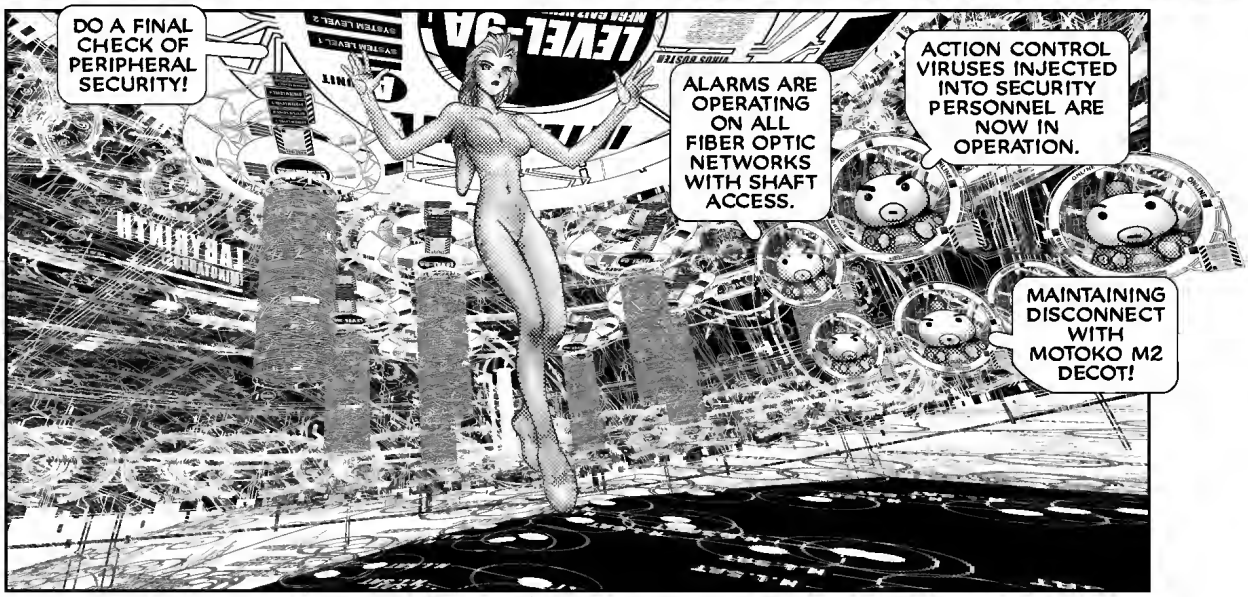
WOW... A *PRE-MEDITATED* CRIME!!
DON'T PUT IT THAT WAY! IT'S A PERFECTLY ORDINARY TACTIC USED AGAINST E-THUGS!
*ER*... OF COURSE, I NORMALLY ONLY USE IT TO CONTROL EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, BUT IT CAME IN HANDY HERE.
I DUNNO... STILL SEEMS LIKE A CRIMINAL ACT TO ME...
HMMM
LOOK... I REALLY THINK I OUGHTTA EXORCISE YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS.
CLEAN IT UP A LITTLE, Y'KNOW?
I'D LIKE TO EXORCISE *YOU*.
HERE WE GO...
FWMP
TIME TO EARN MY SALARY.
NNNK

LESSEE...THERE ARE ONLY TWELVE PLACES A HUMAN OR HUMAN-ASPECT PROSTHETIC BODY CAN GET THROUGH THE ACCESS SHAFTS LEADING INTO THE DECATONCALE... AND EIGHT OF THOSE ARE BEING BLOCKED BY SPIDERS.
IS SLEEPY JIM STILL BLOCKING ONE?! IF HE IS, HAUL HIM OUT OF THERE!
PUT TOGETHER AN ARMORED ASSAULT TEAM FOR ME, AND SEND THEM OVER TO THE CENTRAL SECTOR.
GOTCHA!
MISS! SECURITY HERE! I NEED TO CONTACT THE PRESIDENT, *ON THE DOUBLE!*
OH...?!
THE PRESIDENT'S OUT ON PERSONAL BUSINESS NOW, SIR, AND I'M *TERRIBLY* SORRY, BUT IT'LL TAKE AWHILE TO CONTACT HIM.
THIS IS *NOT* MY LUCKY DAY...

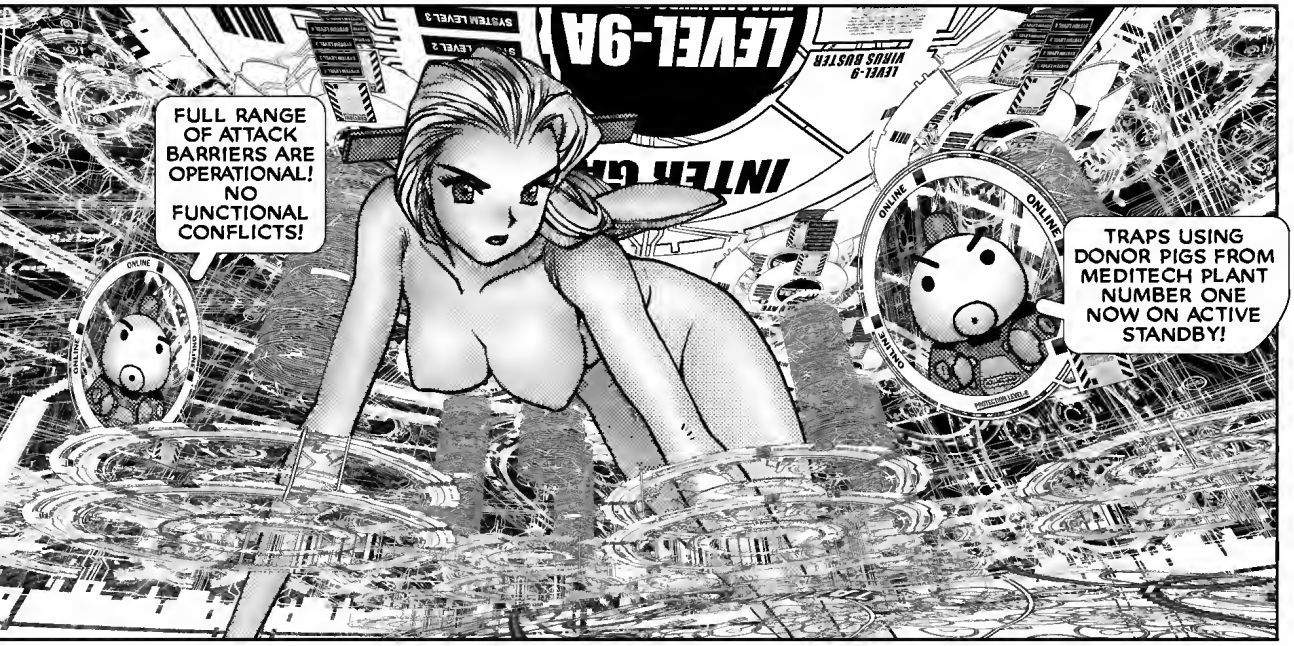

SURE SEEMS LIKE TODAY ISN'T MY LUCKY DAY.
TOO BAD... I WANTED TO TAKE A MORE GENTLE APPROACH AND GET IN HERE THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS.
↑ COMPANY LAN TERMINAL
↑ HARDENED BARRIER & SURROGATE RESET BOX
DECATONCALE TERMINAL ↑
WANT ME TO ACTIVATE THE BODY ARMOR VIRUS?
NOT 'TIL I TELL YOU.
WE'RE WORKING BACK FROM THE POINT WHERE THEY CALLED IN THE POLICE ATTACK FORCE... GOT THE SATELLITE SETTINGS?
DEPLOYING ALONG THREE AXES OF ROUTE ARRAYS... STANDING BY WITH ALL TYPES OF ATTACK BARRIERS!
THERE ARE 17 SATELLITES ABOVE HQ. HOW DO YOU WANT TO CONNECT THE COMPANY'S INTERNAL ROUTES TO THE DECATONCALE?
WE'LL DEPLOY WITH MAXIMUM ORDINARY THRESHOLD. SET A 0.5MS GAP FOR PURSUERS.
I WANT A BACKUP WITH FULL FUNCTIONALITY!
AND WATCH OUT FOR ANY COMPOUND VIRUSES!
YES'M!
GIVE TOP PRIORITY TO THE SYSTEM'S NEW AREA SETTINGS!
ONLINE
LINEURO SYSTEM 5.6
JVC-ONLINE

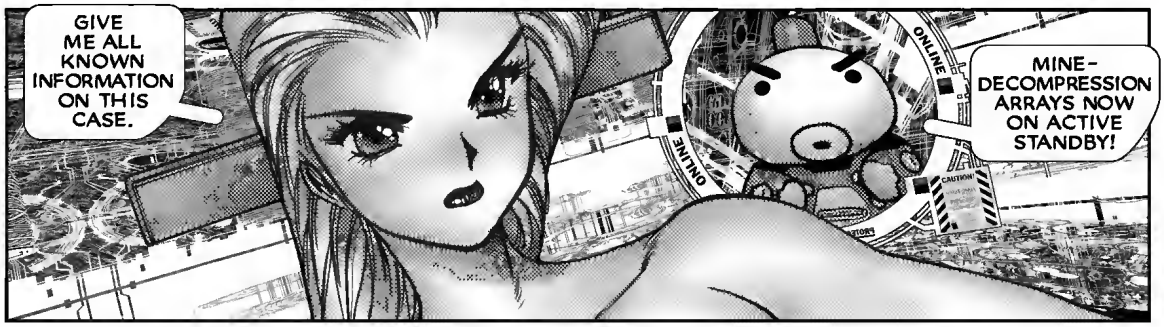

GOSH, I DON'T THINK THIS AI'S GOT A BUILT-IN GREETING FUNCTION, MA'AM...
GOOD AFTERNOON, DECATONCALE.
LEVEL-9A
SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4
INJECT THE MOTOKO FILE SYSTEM... SET UP AN ADVANCED COMBAT CAPABILITY WITH EIGHT ARRAYS.
AS SOON AS THEY BREAK THROUGH, RUN NEW VERSIONS IN RANDOMIZED SEQUENCE... STAND BY!
FOR THE DECOYS, SET MAZES IN TRIPLICATE. MAXIMIZE CPU PROCESSING LOAD.
ASSUME WE'RE FACING MULTIPLE ENEMIES AND DISPERSE THE SETS... SPLIT UP INTO FOUR GROUPS AND ACTIVATE THRESHOLD TRIGGERS!
LINK TO ALL KNOWN SATELLITE SYSTEMS!
CAUTION!

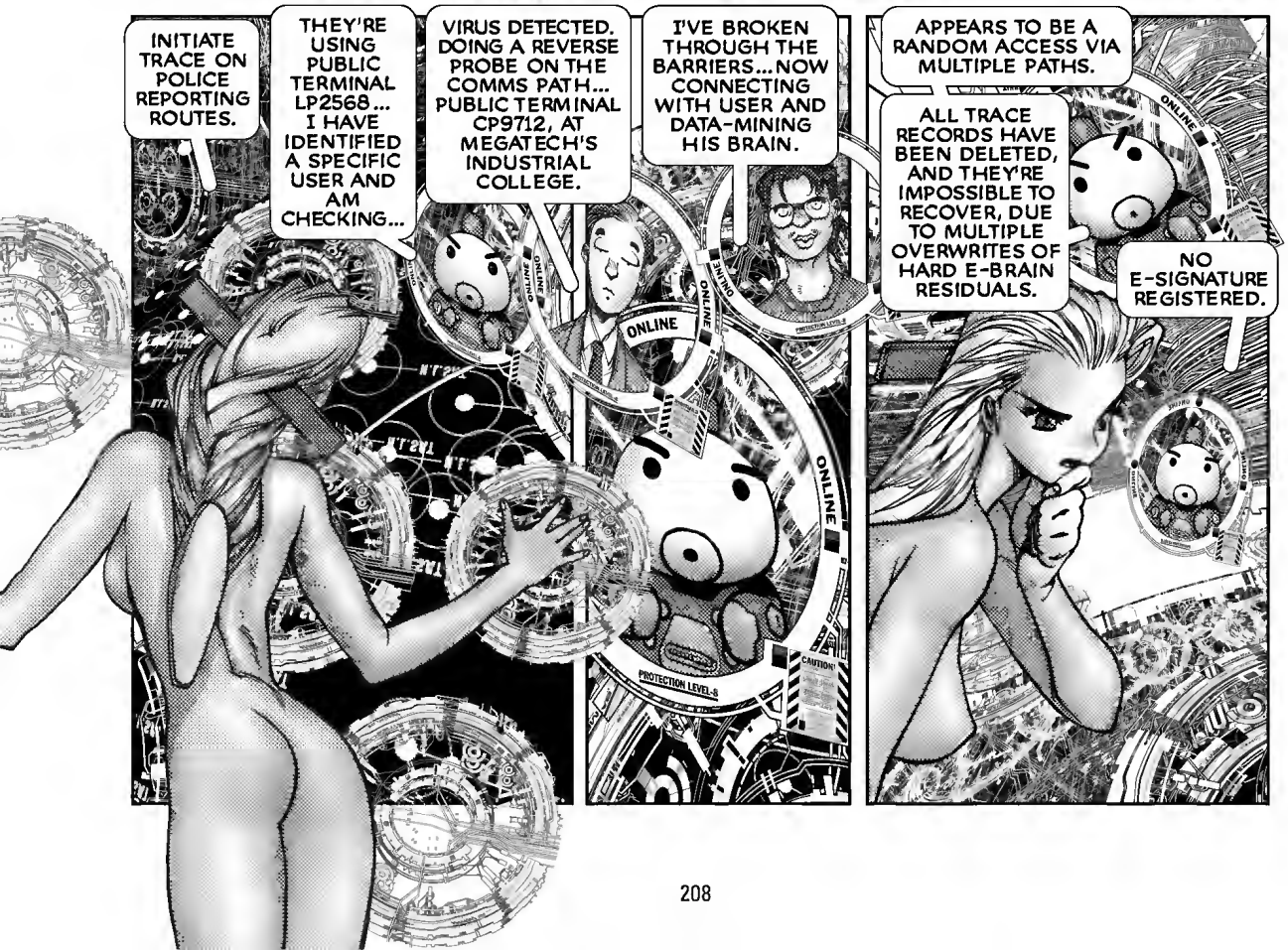


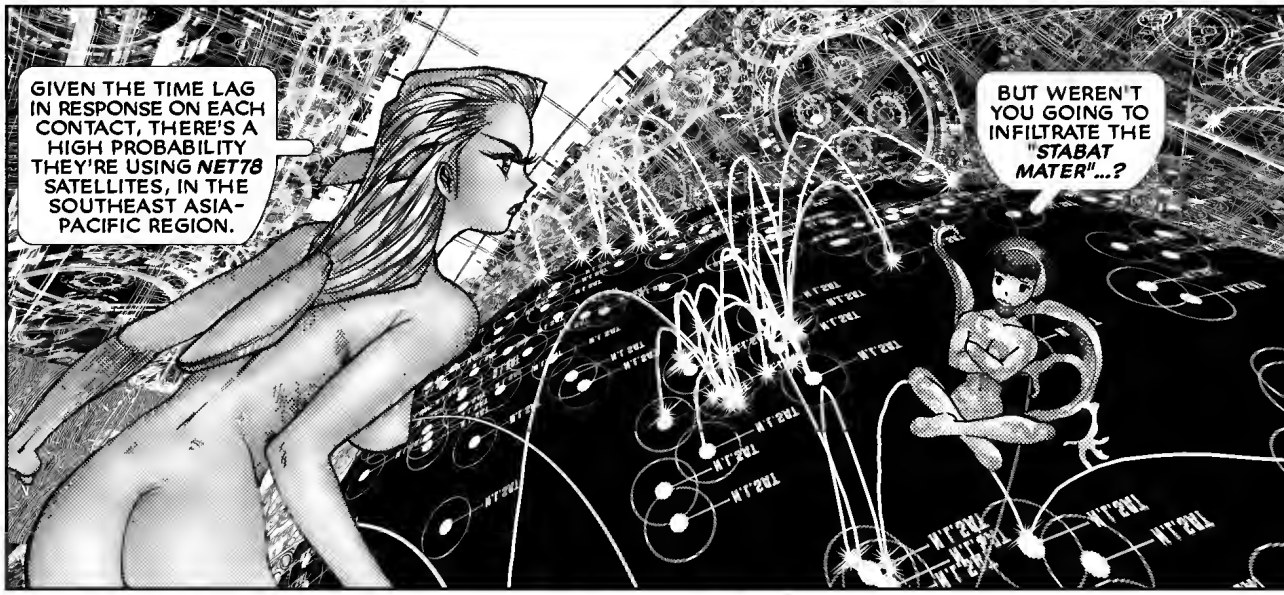



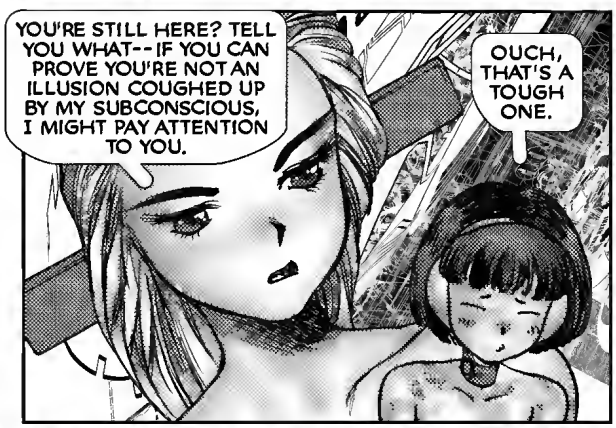

MOTOKO M2: Name of the other Motoko decot, the one who has been stopped by security.

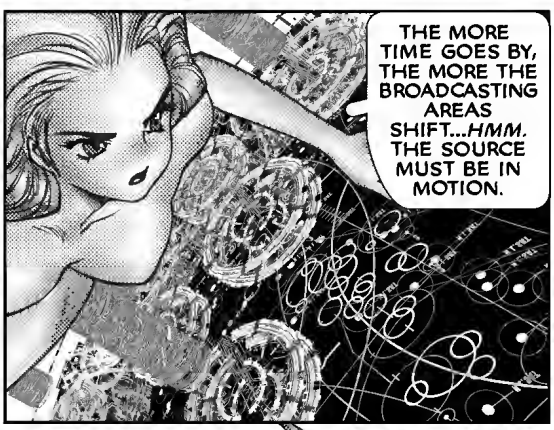

FULL RANGE OF ATTACK BARRIERS ARE OPERATIONAL! NO FUNCTIONAL CONFLICTS!
TRAPS USING DONOR PIGS FROM MEDITECH PLANT NUMBER ONE NOW ON ACTIVE STANDBY!
LEVEL-9A
VIRUS BUSTER
ONLINE

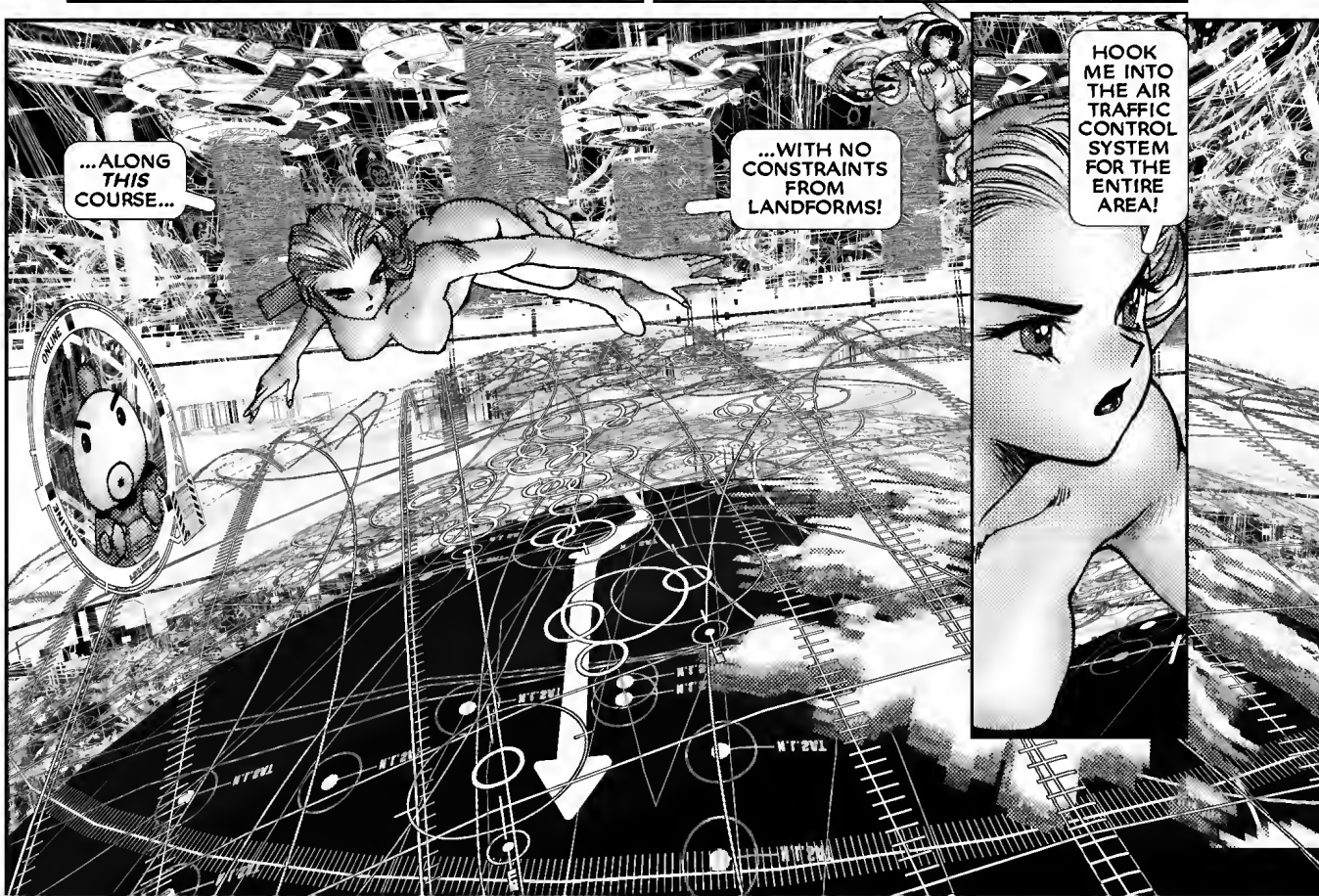

GIVE ME ALL KNOWN INFORMATION ON THIS CASE.
MINE- DECOMPRESSION ARRAYS NOW ON ACTIVE STANDBY!
ONLINE
CAUTION

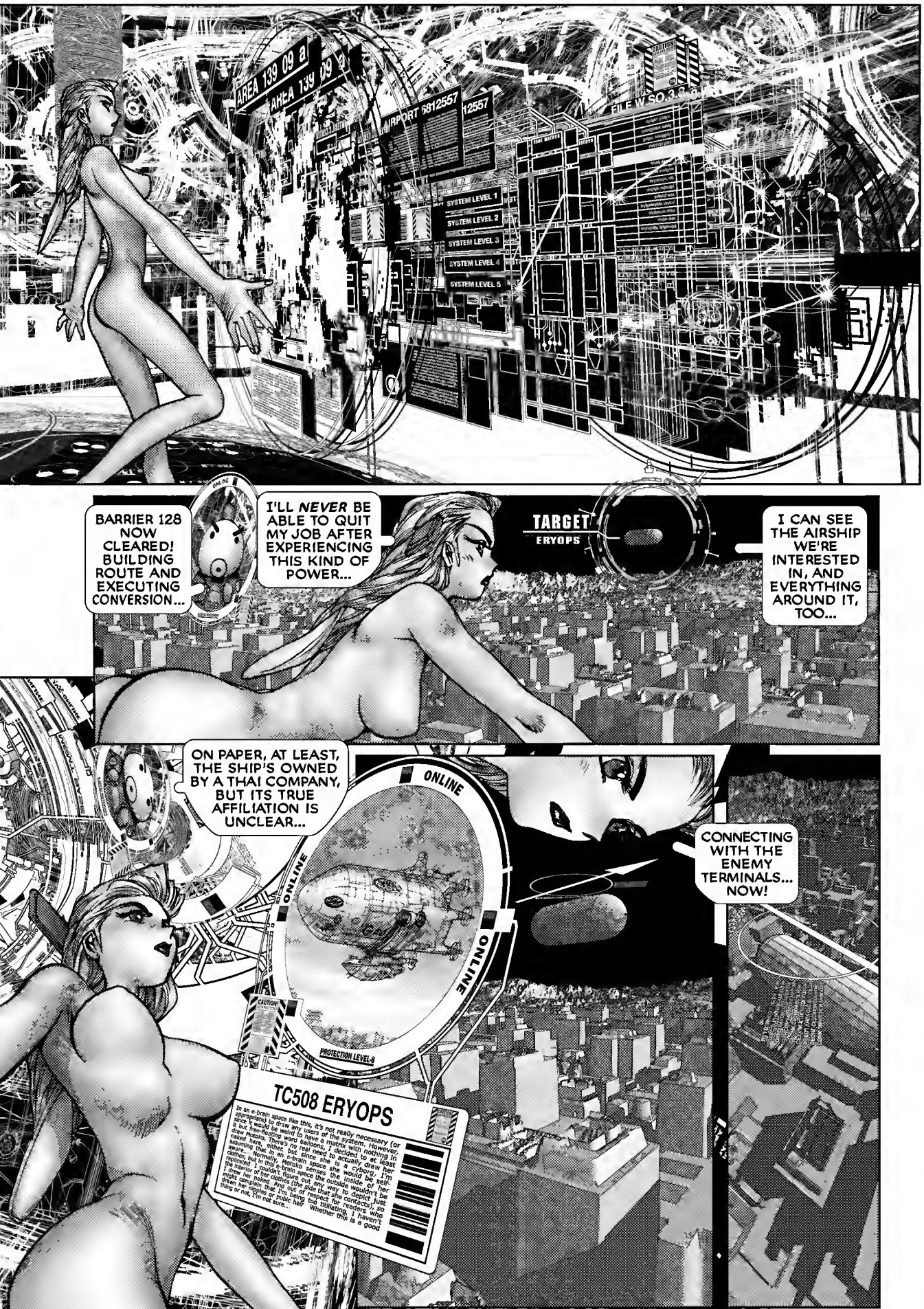

INITIATE TRACE ON POLICE REPORTING ROUTES.
THEY'RE USING PUBLIC TERMINAL LP2568... I HAVE IDENTIFIED A SPECIFIC USER AND AM CHECKING...
VIRUS DETECTED. DOING A REVERSE PROBE ON THE COMMS PATH... PUBLIC TERMINAL CP9712, AT MEGATECH'S INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE.
I'VE BROKEN THROUGH THE BARRIERS...NOW CONNECTING WITH USER AND DATA-MINING HIS BRAIN.
APPEARS TO BE A RANDOM ACCESS VIA MULTIPLE PATHS.
ALL TRACE RECORDS HAVE BEEN DELETED, AND THEY'RE IMPOSSIBLE TO RECOVER, DUE TO MULTIPLE OVERWRITES OF HARD E-BRAIN RESIDUALS.
NO E-SIGNATURE REGISTERED.
ONLINE
PROTECTION LEVEL-8
CAUTION


GIVEN THE TIME LAG IN RESPONSE ON EACH CONTACT, THERE'S A HIGH PROBABILITY THEY'RE USING *NET78* SATELLITES, IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIA-PACIFIC REGION.
BUT WEREN'T YOU GOING TO INFILTRATE THE "*STABAT MATER*"...?

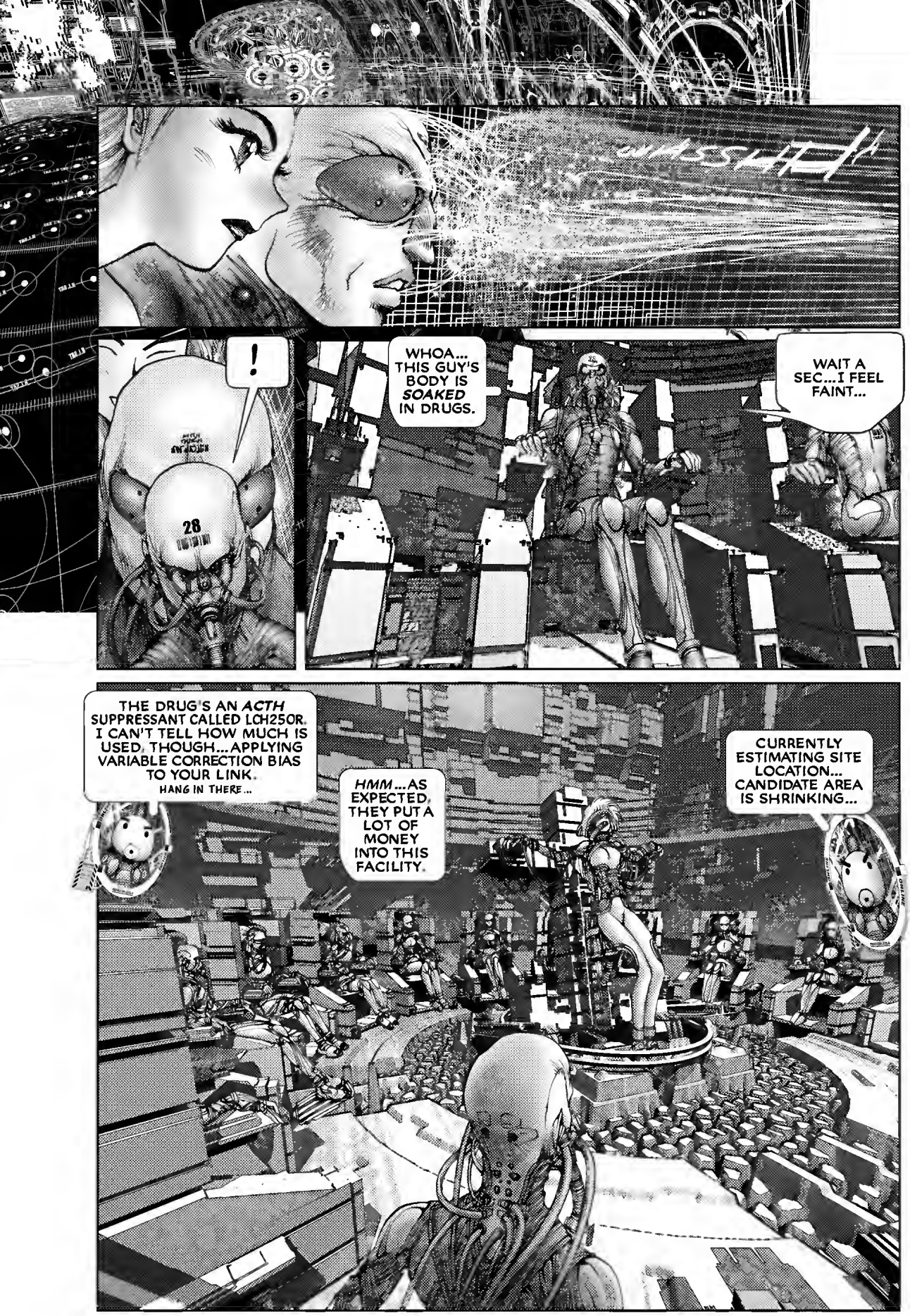

YOU'RE STILL HERE? TELL YOU WHAT--IF YOU CAN PROVE YOU'RE NOT AN ILLUSION COUGHED UP BY MY SUBCONSCIOUS, I MIGHT PAY ATTENTION TO YOU.
OUCH, THAT'S A TOUGH ONE.


THE MORE TIME GOES BY, THE MORE THE BROADCASTING AREAS SHIFT...*HMM.* THE SOURCE MUST BE IN MOTION.


...ALONG *THIS* COURSE...
...WITH NO CONSTRAINTS FROM LANDFORMS!
HOOK ME INTO THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM FOR THE ENTIRE AREA!

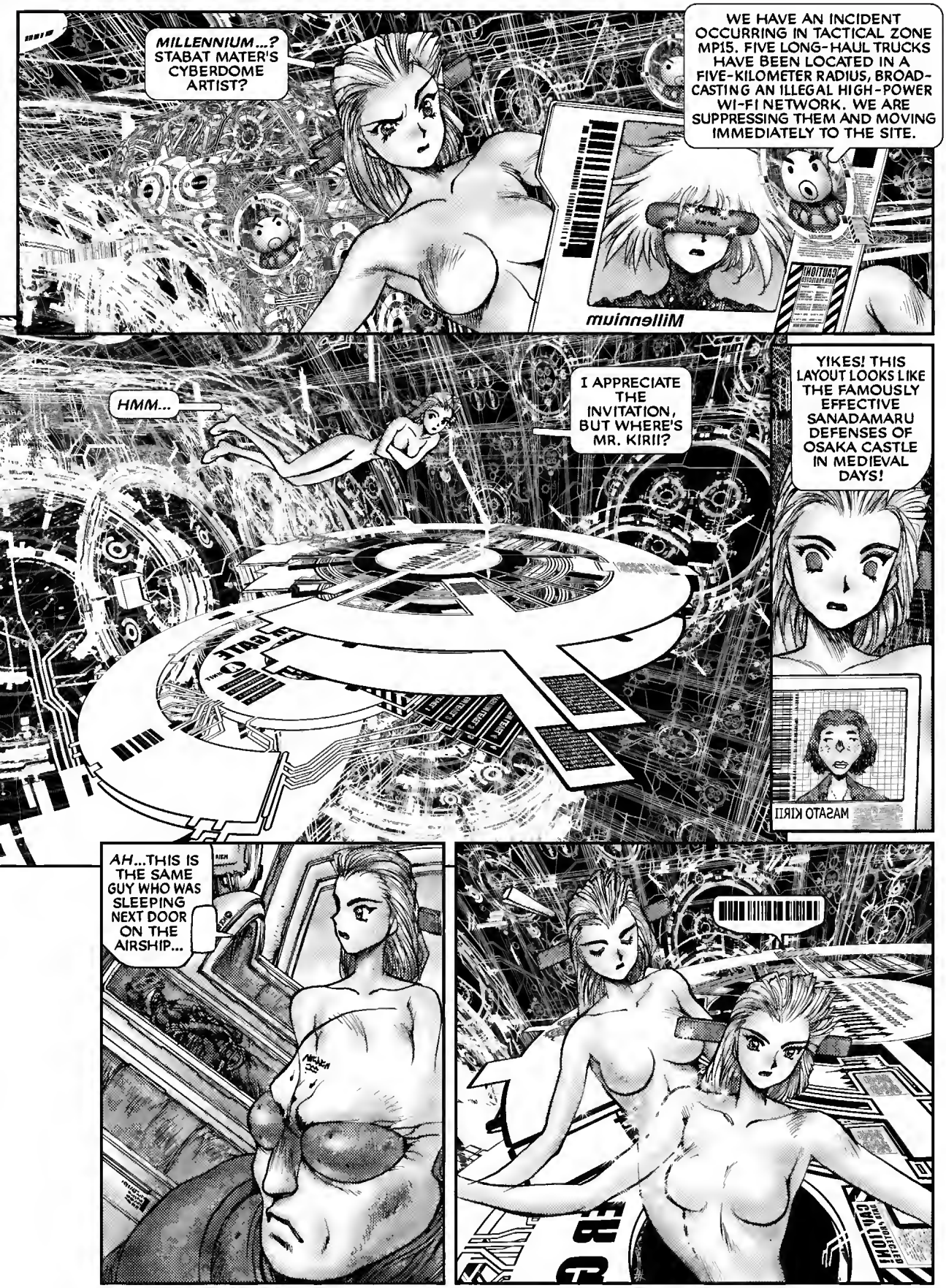

AREA MAP (barrier)
AIRPORT MAIN SYSTEM (barrier)
EMPLOYEE FILE (barrier)
AIRPORT MAIN SYSTEM CORE (barrier)
AREA 139 09 a
AIRPORT 6812557
SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4
SYSTEM LEVEL 5
BARRIER 128 NOW CLEARED! BUILDING ROUTE AND EXECUTING CONVERSION...
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO QUIT MY JOB AFTER EXPERIENCING THIS KIND OF POWER...
TARGET
ERYOPS
I CAN SEE THE AIRSHIP WE'RE INTERESTED IN, AND EVERYTHING AROUND IT, TOO...
ON PAPER, AT LEAST, THE SHIP'S OWNED BY A THAI COMPANY, BUT ITS TRUE AFFILIATION IS UNCLEAR...
ONLINE
CAUTION
PROTECTION LEVEL-4
CONNECTING WITH THE ENEMY TERMINALS... NOW!
TC508 ERYOPS
In an e-brain space like this, it's not really necessary (or appropriate) to draw any users of the system. However, since it would be weird to leave a matrix with nothing in it but, hey, floating word balloons, I decided to at least draw Motoko floating here. There's no real need to actually draw her assuming she lies in an out, since she would be, of self-denies. Normally, Motoko's e-brain space she would be, of self-denies. Normally, Motoko's e-brain space she would be, of self-denies. Normally, Motoko's e-brain space

beep!
THIS IS AREA 139, CONTROL 09. COME IN, TC508!
?
WE HAVE A *RANK THREE* ENEMY, AN ADVANCED DEFENSE SYSTEM USING WHAT'S APPARENTLY A HUMAN BRAIN. 485 MINES CLEARED, ARRAY 56 HIT.
THIS IS TC508! HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
WHAT'S CONTROL WANT?
*HEH*...LISTEN TO *THIS*, FRACTO!
≥AH≤
*HEY!* THESE GUYS ARE JACKED FULL OF DRUGS! TOO DANGEROUS TO DO A FULL SENSORY INJECTION...THAT LEVEL OF BRAIN AUTO-PILOTING MEANS THEY'RE ALMOST NON-HUMAN!
WHERE IS THE BIGGEST BARRIER? THIS IT?
*WOW*... WHAT A SIMPLE LAYOUT!
ONLINE

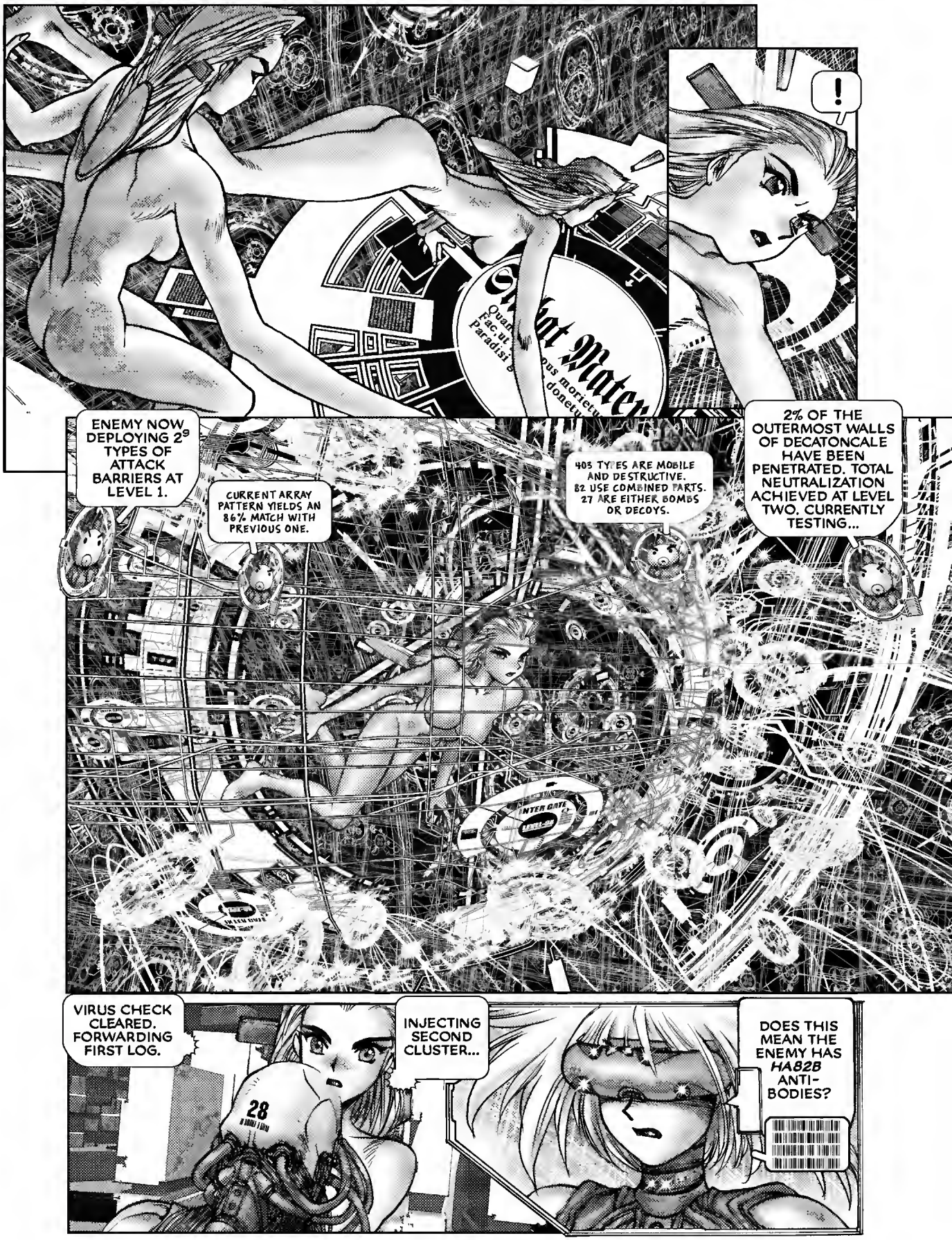

WHOA... THIS GUY'S BODY IS *SOAKED* IN DRUGS.
WAIT A SEC...I FEEL FAINT...
!
28
THE DRUG'S AN *ACTH* SUPPRESSANT CALLED LCH250R. I CAN'T TELL HOW MUCH IS USED, THOUGH...APPLYING VARIABLE CORRECTION BIAS TO YOUR LINK.
HANG IN THERE...
*HMM*...AS EXPECTED, THEY PUT A LOT OF MONEY INTO THIS FACILITY.
CURRENTLY ESTIMATING SITE LOCATION... CANDIDATE AREA IS SHRINKING...

TOTAL-BARRIER: Refers to a state wherein independent intercept devices are physically attached to the main system address, and multiple types of attack-barriers are injected in response to any access from the outside. Creates a situation analogous to a "hollow porcupine." Once activated, a total-barrier can't be deactivated from outside with software; instead, it has to be turned off with an internal physical switch.

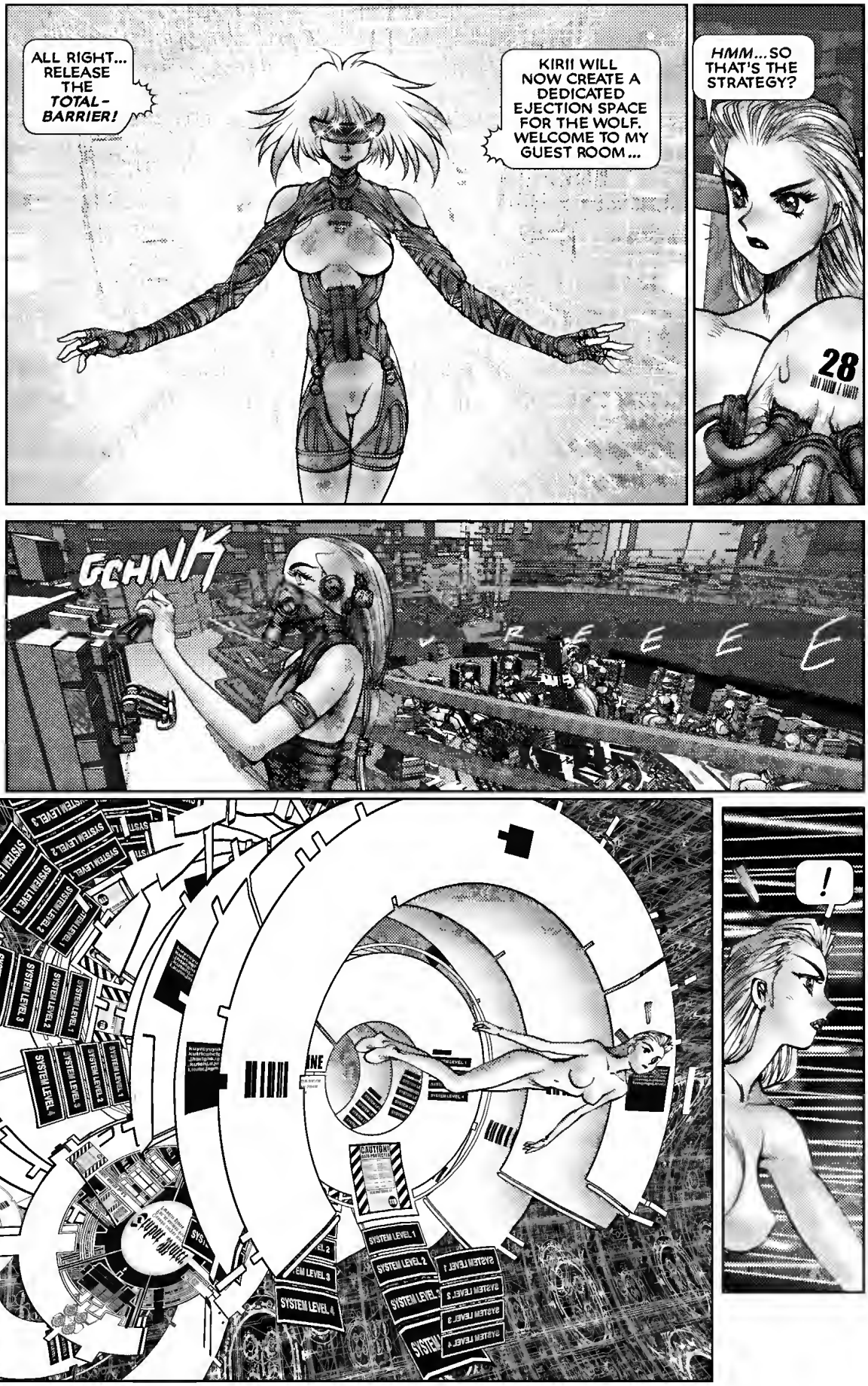
STAGE: Refers to the e-brain space that the character in the second panel is overseeing and deploying. May sound like a game environment, but it's really like a dramatic space allowing participation and viewing. It's a type of two-way movie space. Motoko is dealing here with Stabat Mater, which (although this is not her primary concern) is actually a famous entertainment (religious) organization physically located in Singapore.

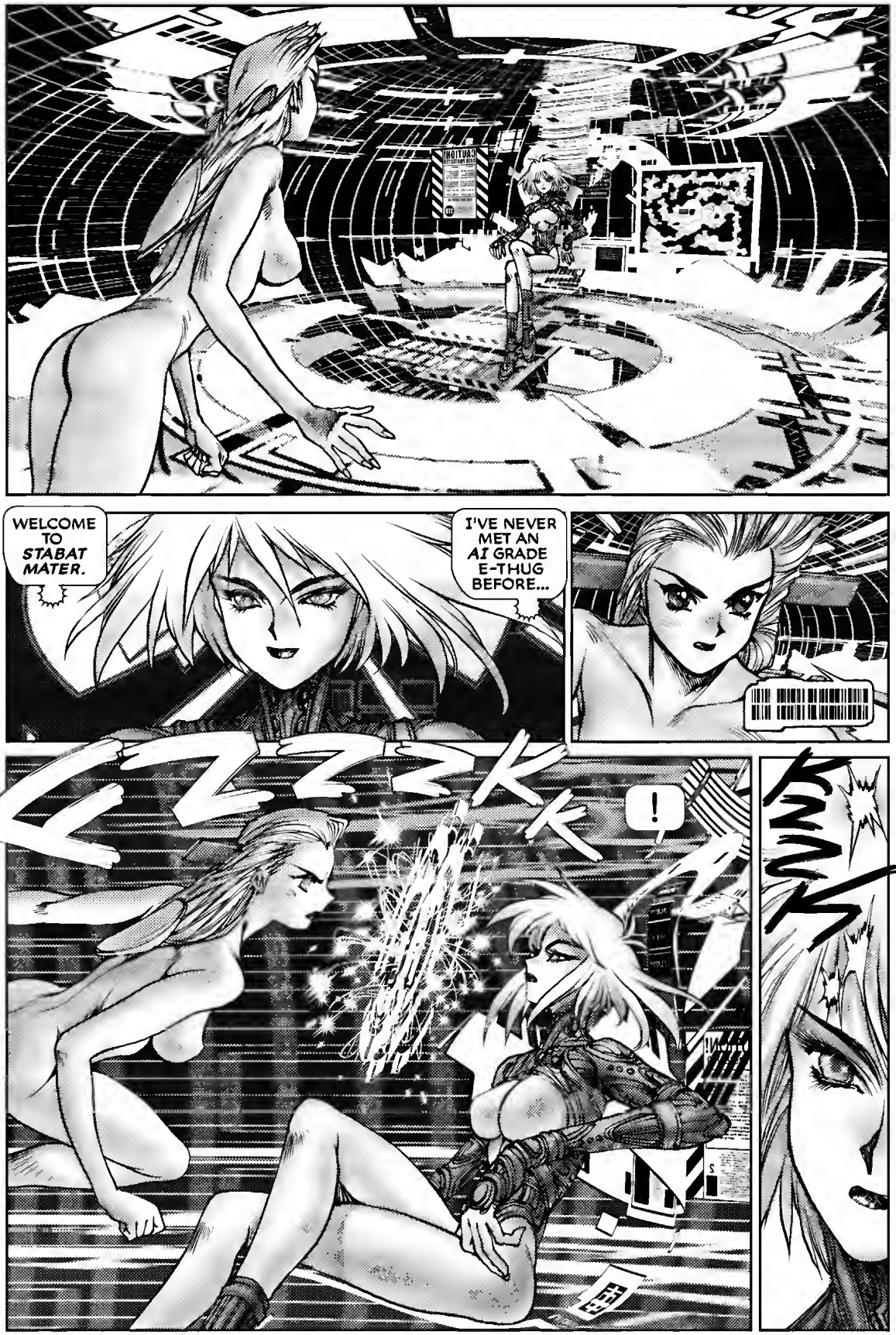



At this point, Motoko can't see the entire system, because she hasn't yet infiltrated Millennium. She only has access to the information that the airship pilot (Fracto, a.k.a. Unit 28) has, but Stabat Mater consists of more than what she can currently view through him. I confess that I probably should have given Millennium a more feminine-sounding name, such as "Millennia" or "Millenietta."




Unit 28 is using retinal projection to see Kirii's log as-is, visually. It's hard to see from the drawing, but there is a hardware disconnect, so it's difficult to access Unit 28 via Kirii from outside the system. As invited by the enemy, Motoko is sending a copy of herself into the Kirii route and working to destroy part of the total-barrier in the line connecting Unit 28 and the stage.


ALL RIGHT... RELEASE THE *TOTAL-BARRIER!*
KIRII WILL NOW CREATE A DEDICATED EJECTION SPACE FOR THE WOLF. WELCOME TO MY GUEST ROOM...
*HMM...* SO THAT'S THE STRATEGY?
28
GCHNK
V R E E E E
SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4
CAUTION!
!




Millennium usually makes his/herself appear in this type of form, out of habit, but Motoko doesn't appear to Millennium the way she's depicted here. Millennium is only aware of Motoko's existence. Sort of like being aware of a ghost in the darkness of the night....

AFTERNOON... I'VE COME TO RETURN THE PRESENT.
THE ONE THAT REJECTED ANY ATTEMPT TO READ IT... I'VE BEEN DYING TO KNOW HOW THE SENDER WOULD RESPOND.
AAH... BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT IT'D BE ACCEPTED IN AN EJECTION SPACE AND THAT JUST ONE DECOY WOULD BE SACRIFICED. I WANTED TO SEE SOME MORE ORIGINAL ANTIBODIES USED.
ISN'T THIS THE SAME RESPONSE AS THE MISTRESS? NOW UPGRADING TACTICAL ARRAYS...
WAIT A SEC... THIS EJECTION SPACE IS--?!?
WHAT TH--?!
ENEMY ATTACK-BARRIERS HAVE PENETRATED LAYER TWO! WE HAVE NEUTRALIZED THEM AT LAYER THREE!
IT MUST BE A VIRUS THAT COMBINES AND ACTIVATES WITH THE SEARCH DATA IN THIS ROOM!

GET ME A REPORT ON THE E-THUG RESPONSE LOG.
UNITS 16 AND 32 ARE CONTAMINATED BY UNIDENTIFIED VIRUSES! FREEZING THEM... NOW!
VIRUS CHECK CLEARED... FORWARDING RESPONSE LOG.
UNIT 15
UNIT 28
!
THE ANTIBODIES ARE DISINTEGRATING! HAVE THEY BEEN COUNTER-INFECTED BY A VIRUS...?
VREEC
KCHAK

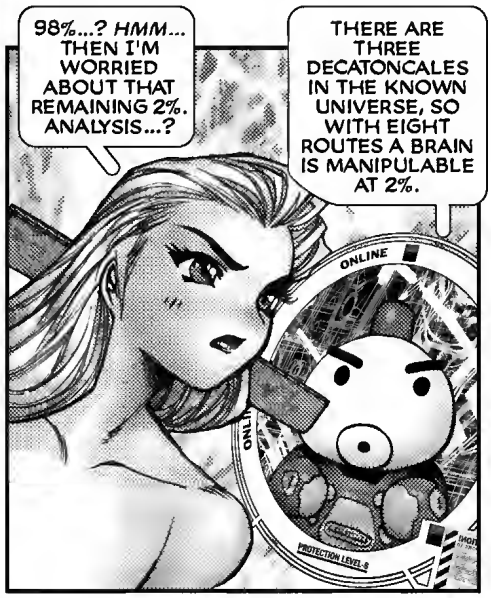
SET UP A DETOUR FOR THE INVADER!
SYSTEM 10865 HAS CEASED OPERATING!
WE HAVE A TYPE 280 ERROR!
REBUILDING ATTACK-BARRIERS... LOADING ANTIBODIES! VIRUS ANALYSIS IN PROCESS...
DEFE... SYSTEM 0563 IS NOT RESPONDING...
WE HAVE A TYPE 657 ERROR! WARNING! A TYPE 657 ERROR HAS OCCURRED!
NOW SEARCHING FOR VIRUSES. ACCESS PERMISSION GRANTED AT PRIORITY LINE ON LEVEL FIVE.
UNIT 28
THIS IS THE OUTER PERIMETER OF A BIOBRAIN ARRAY...SHOULD LEAD INTO THE *CNS*.

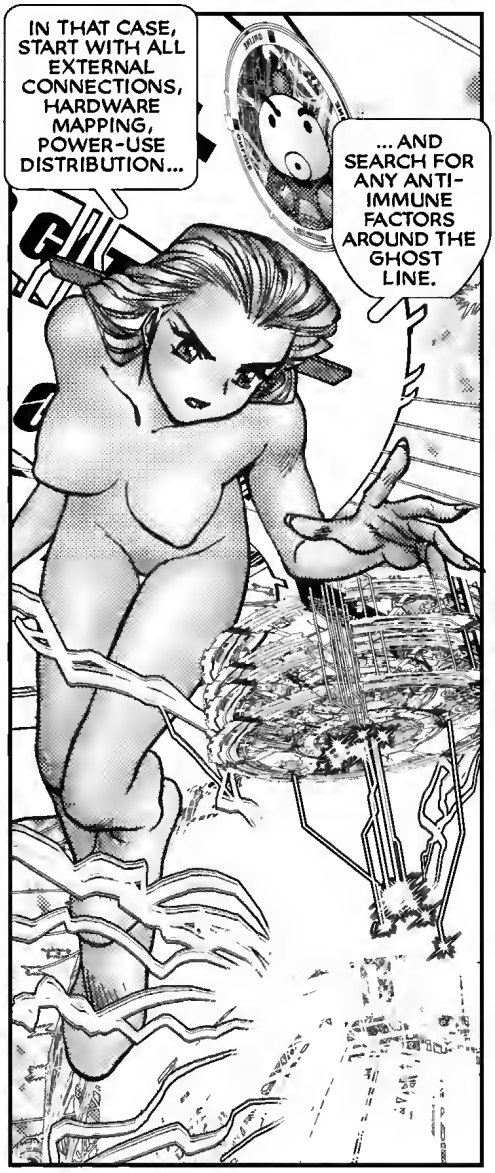
Using the "reverse probe" referred to here involves identifying or estimating the location of enemy hardware and preparing a physical attack on it. Wi-fi terror, land-line terror, or satellite-hijacking tactics may be used against enemy hardware for harassment purposes where it is presumed to exist, even without a positive identification. Since Millennium's opponent is a "Multigate Class" AI, and a huge investment has presumably been made in hardware defenses, she knows full well that it's not enough to simply use multiple remote decots.

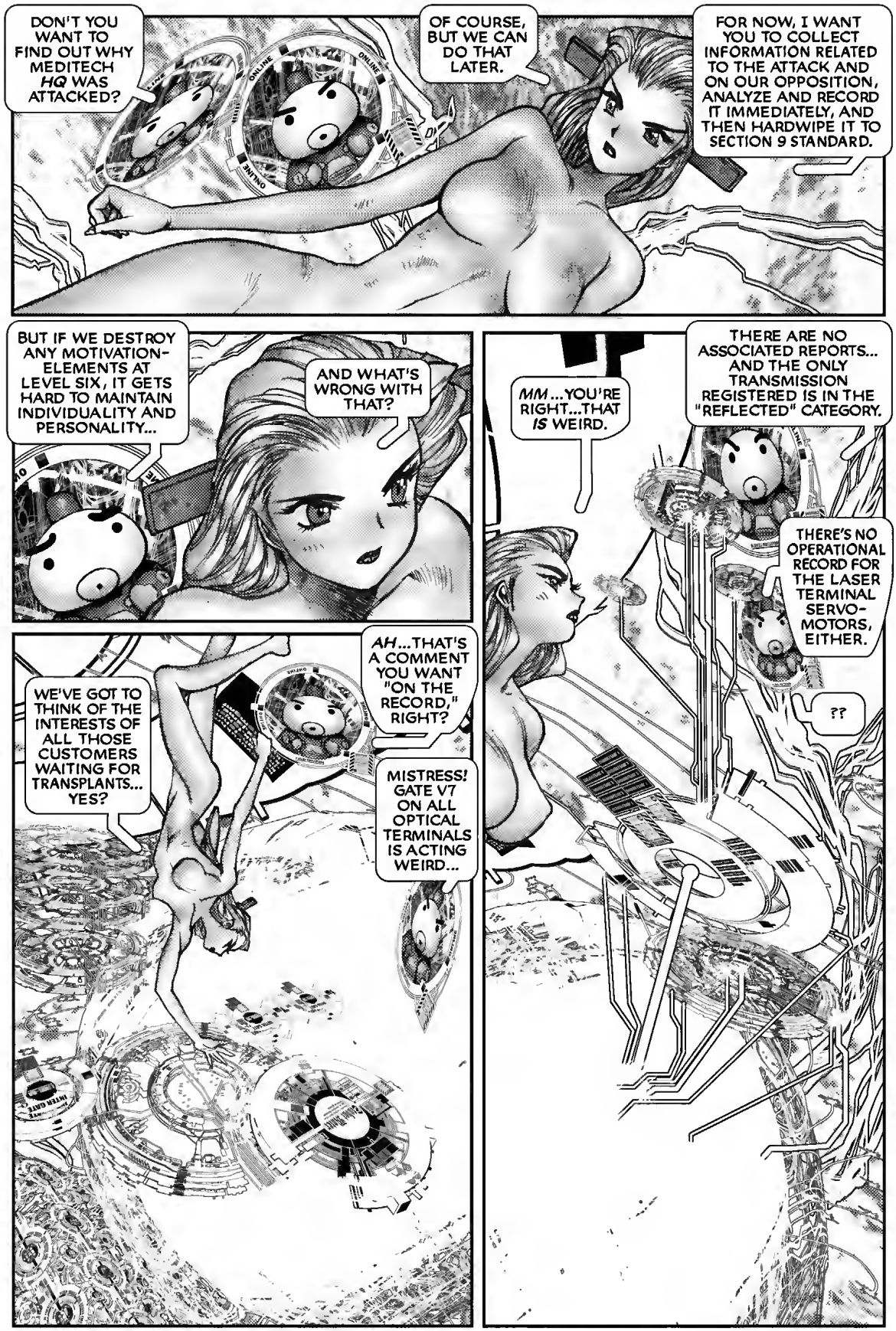
BARRIER 014 HAS BEEN PENETRATED!
CONVERTING ENCRYPTION CODE AND REBUILDING... DONE.
BARRIER 078 HAS BEEN PENETRATED!
BARRIER 032 TYPE 280 ERROR REPORTED!
WE HAVE A SYSTEM ABNORMALITY IN THE LIFE FORM PROTECTION PROCESSOR...
ENEMY HAS CRACKED FLUCTUATION PATTERNS IN OUR BARRIERS!
FORWARD THE VIRUS-CHECK LOGS TO ME.
FZZAK
K

WELL...? DID YOU TEACH HER A LESSON?
OF COURSE.
LOOKS LIKE THE COMPOUND VIRUSES I INFILTRATED INTO EACH REPORT FROM UNIT 28 WERE SUCCESSFULLY ACTIVATED...
KINDA SHLIPPED IN FREW A WIDDLE TEENY CWACK, DIDJA?
COULD YOU REFRAIN FROM USING THAT SORT OF CONTEMPTUOUS LANGUAGE?
JUST BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY...
NO ROLE TO PLAY? WELL, WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT... HEH HEH HEH...
LEVEL-SIX BARRIERS RELEASED... STAND BY FOR ACCESS!

JUST TO BE SURE, CHECK THE PERIMETER.
GIVEN THE RESPONSE RATE, THERE'S A 98% PROBABILITY THAT THIS BRAIN IS THE SOURCE, MA'AM.

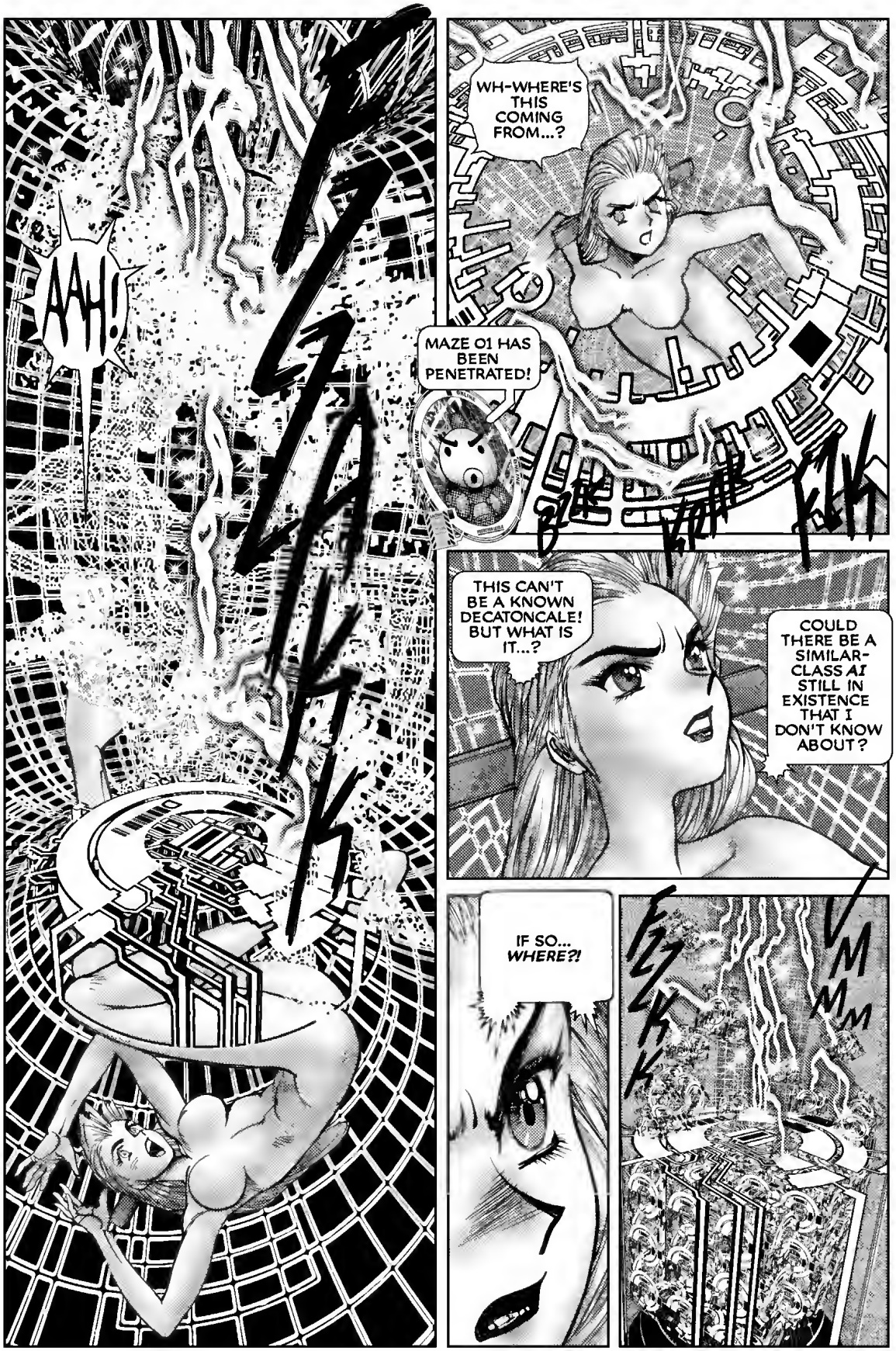

98%...? HMM... THEN I'M WORRIED ABOUT THAT REMAINING 2%. ANALYSIS...?
THERE ARE THREE DECATONCALES IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE, SO WITH EIGHT ROUTES A BRAIN IS MANIPULABLE AT 2%.
ONLINE
PROTECTION LEVEL-S

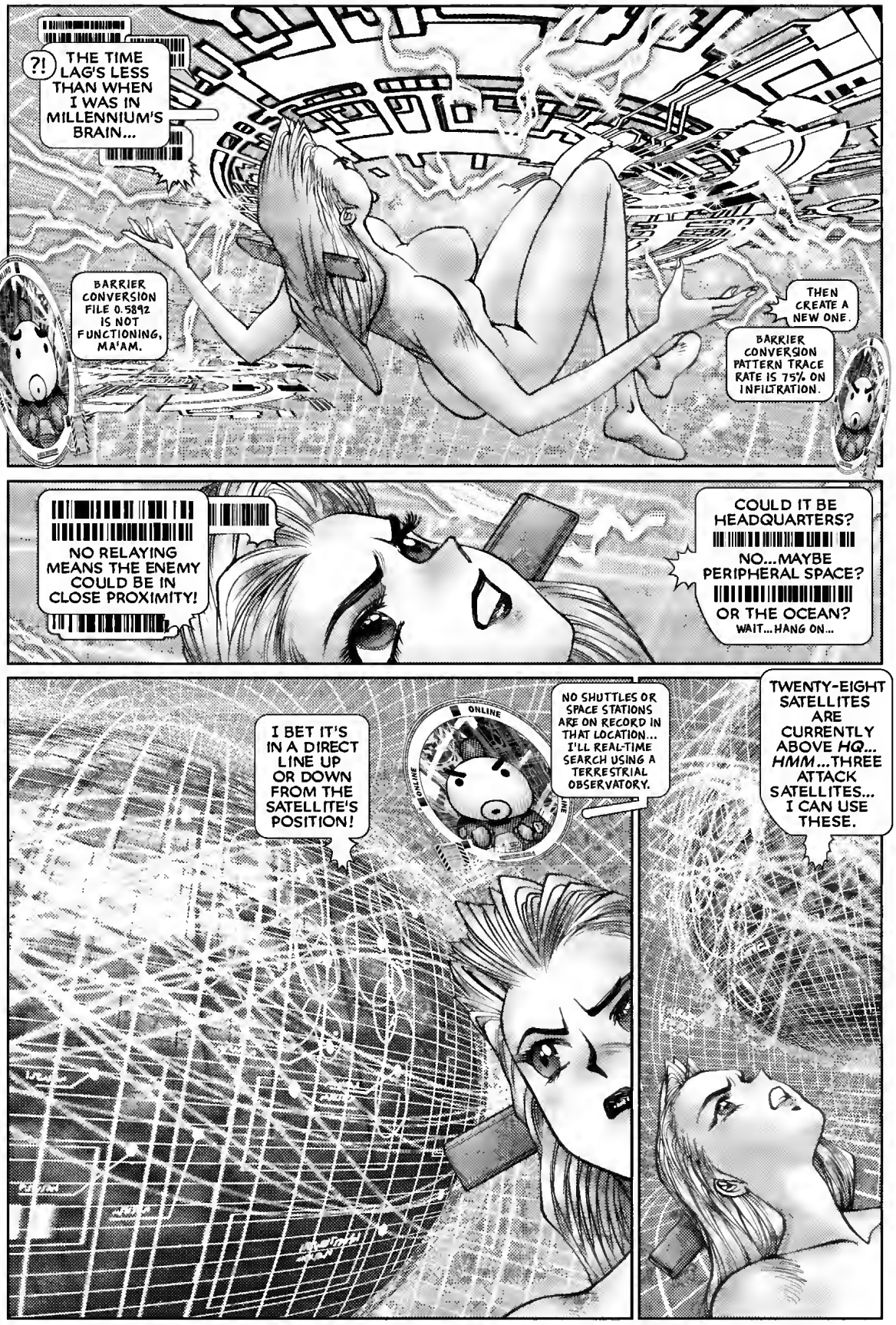

IN THAT CASE, START WITH ALL EXTERNAL CONNECTIONS, HARDWARE MAPPING, POWER-USE DISTRIBUTION...
...AND SEARCH FOR ANY ANTI-IMMUNE FACTORS AROUND THE GHOST LINE.


DON'T YOU WANT TO FIND OUT WHY MEDITECH *HQ* WAS ATTACKED?
OF COURSE, BUT WE CAN DO THAT LATER.
FOR NOW, I WANT YOU TO COLLECT INFORMATION RELATED TO THE ATTACK AND ON OUR OPPOSITION, ANALYZE AND RECORD IT IMMEDIATELY, AND THEN HARDWIPE IT TO SECTION 9 STANDARD.
BUT IF WE DESTROY ANY MOTIVATION-ELEMENTS AT LEVEL SIX, IT GETS HARD TO MAINTAIN INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY...
AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?
*MM*...YOU'RE RIGHT...THAT *IS* WEIRD.
THERE ARE NO ASSOCIATED REPORTS... AND THE ONLY TRANSMISSION REGISTERED IS IN THE "REFLECTED" CATEGORY.
THERE'S NO OPERATIONAL RECORD FOR THE LASER TERMINAL SERVO-MOTORS, EITHER.
??
*AH*...THAT'S A COMMENT YOU WANT "ON THE RECORD," RIGHT?
WE'VE GOT TO THINK OF THE INTERESTS OF ALL THOSE CUSTOMERS WAITING FOR TRANSPLANTS... YES?
MISTRESS! GATE V7 ON ALL OPTICAL TERMINALS IS ACTING WEIRD...

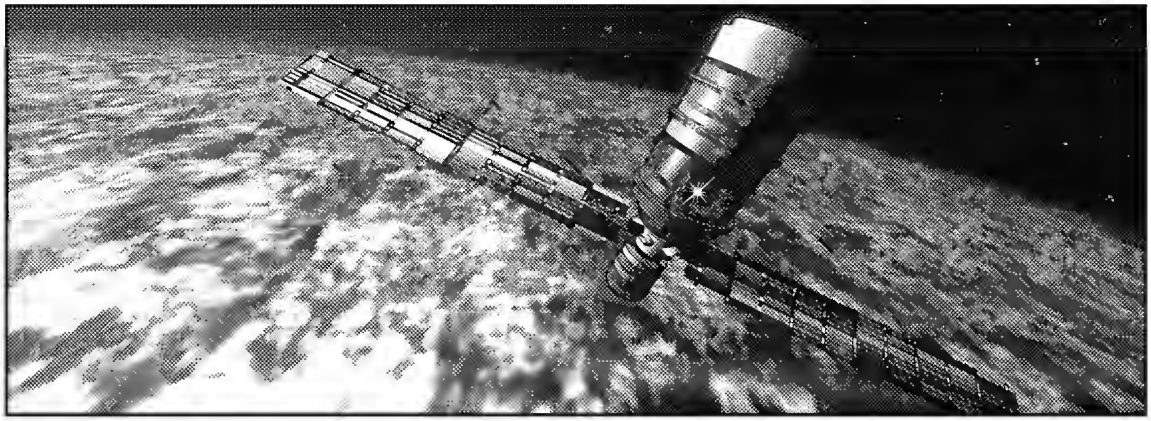
IS THIS A FIXED OPTICAL TERMINAL? I WANT ALL PROBE ARRAYS TO TRANSMIT!
SEARCH ALL CONCEIVABLE APPROACHES TO SEE IF THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE DIRECTION THE TERMINAL'S POINTING!
DEPLOY AND BUILD OUT AROUND GATE 7 OF THE BARRIER ARRAY, THEN...
ONLINE
EH...?!
!!
DECOY-22
SYSTEM DOMPROT

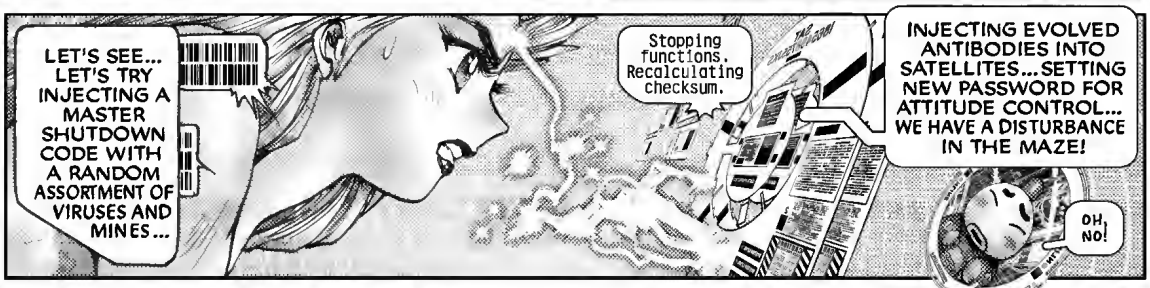
EIGHT DECOYS HAVE SUSTAINED DELTA-LEVEL DAMAGE.
NOW PHYSICALLY DESTROYING ALL IRREPARABLY FRIED NEURO-MATTER.
ANALYZING ENEMY VIRUSES...
I'VE ARRIVED AT THE CORE BODY! MOVE THE DEFENSE LINE UP TO MILLENNIUM'S BRAIN!
SECOND ANTIBODY ARRAY IS COLLAPSING!
NO TIME FOR REPAIRS!
DAMN...COULD THE ENEMY BE USING A DECATONCALE, TOO?
RECONSTRUCT ROUTE ARRAYS AS FAST AS POSSIBLE!
CONAN! MAX! TRY AN "ANCHOR" ON THE ENEMY, USING A PHYSICAL APPROACH.
YES'M...!
DEPLOY A COMPLETE MINE BATTLESET D IN MILLENNIUM'S BRAIN AND ALONG ROUTES WHERE THEY MIGHT BE...DO A FULL BLOCK SEARCH AS WELL!

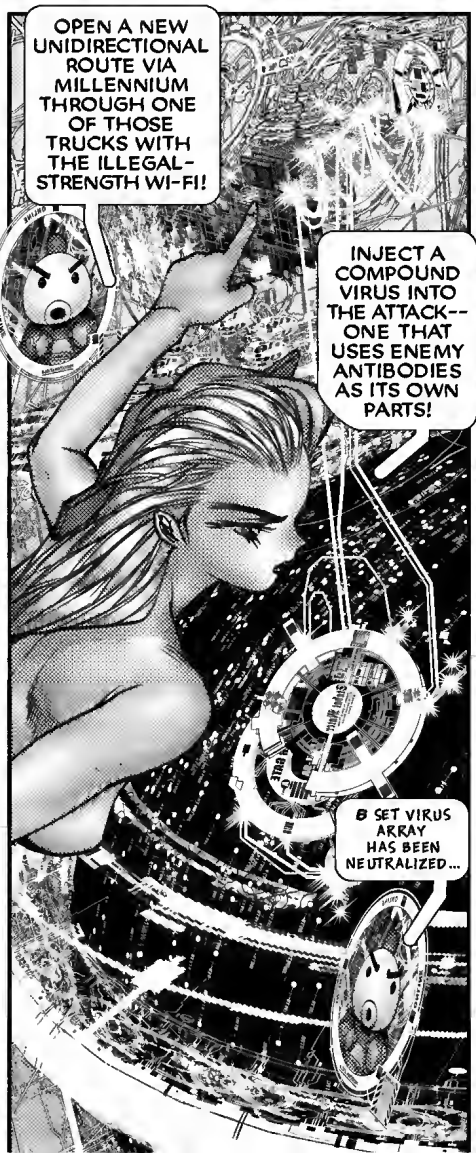

AAH!
WH-WHERE'S THIS COMING FROM...?
MAZE 01 HAS BEEN PENETRATED!
THIS CAN'T BE A KNOWN DECATONCALE! BUT WHAT IS IT...?
COULD THERE BE A SIMILAR-CLASS AI STILL IN EXISTENCE THAT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT?
IF SO... WHERE?!

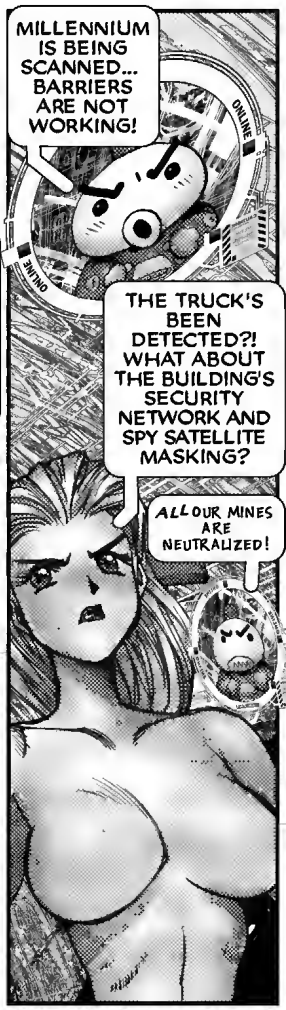

?!
THE TIME LAG'S LESS THAN WHEN I WAS IN MILLENNIUM'S BRAIN...
BARRIER CONVERSION FILE 0.5892 IS NOT FUNCTIONING, MA'AM.
THEN CREATE A NEW ONE.
BARRIER CONVERSION PATTERN TRACE RATE IS 75% ON INFILTRATION.
NO RELAYING MEANS THE ENEMY COULD BE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY!
COULD IT BE HEADQUARTERS?
NO...MAYBE PERIPHERAL SPACE?
OR THE OCEAN?
WAIT...HANG ON...
I BET IT'S IN A DIRECT LINE UP OR DOWN FROM THE SATELLITE'S POSITION!
NO SHUTTLES OR SPACE STATIONS ARE ON RECORD IN THAT LOCATION... I'LL REAL-TIME SEARCH USING A TERRESTRIAL OBSERVATORY.
ONLINE
TWENTY-EIGHT SATELLITES ARE CURRENTLY ABOVE *HQ*... *HMM*...THREE ATTACK SATELLITES... I CAN USE THESE.

Core of Indian space forces (a system where Motoko has a "free pass")
Attack satellite system
Satellite in question
!! MY MINES ARE BEING MODIFIED!
THE ENEMY APPEARS TO BE ACCESSING THE SAME SATELLITE!
I HATE IT WHEN SOMEONE CONTROLS THE SPACE ABOVE ME!
WE'RE GONNA HAVE A HEAD-ON COLLISION...
THE ENEMY'S ACTING LIKE A MIRROR, BUT THERE MUST BE SOME WAY I CAN GET BACK AT IT...
AH! THE SATELLITE'S MOVED INTO AN ATTACK POSITION!
LASER WEAPONS...?! UH OH... HAVE I BEEN TRAPPED BY A SHUTDOWN FUNCTION AND A SELF-DESTRUCT CODE?



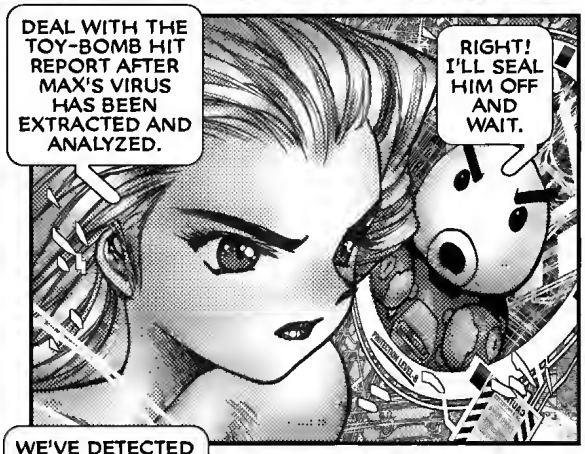


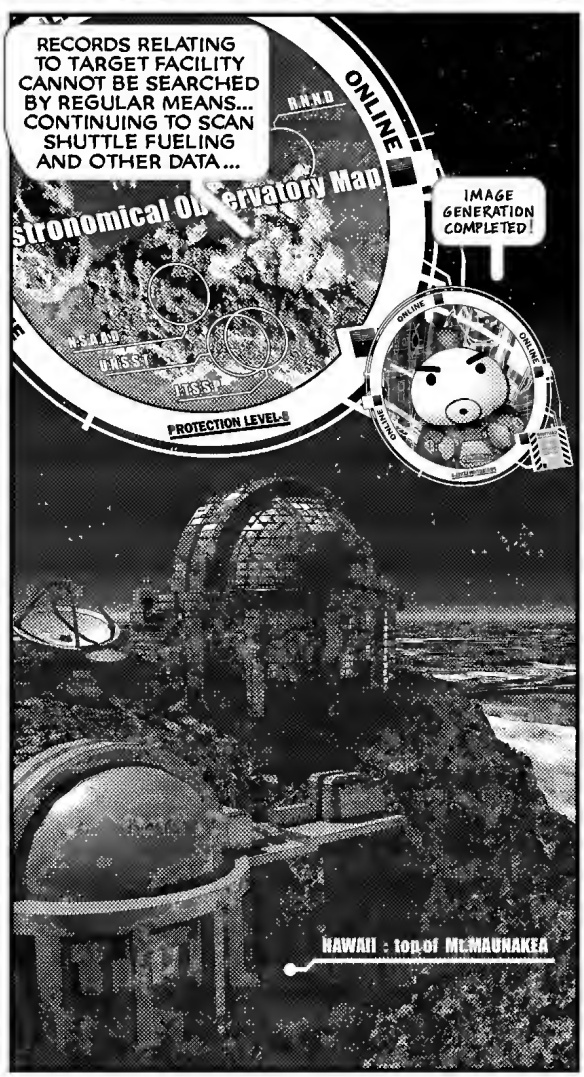



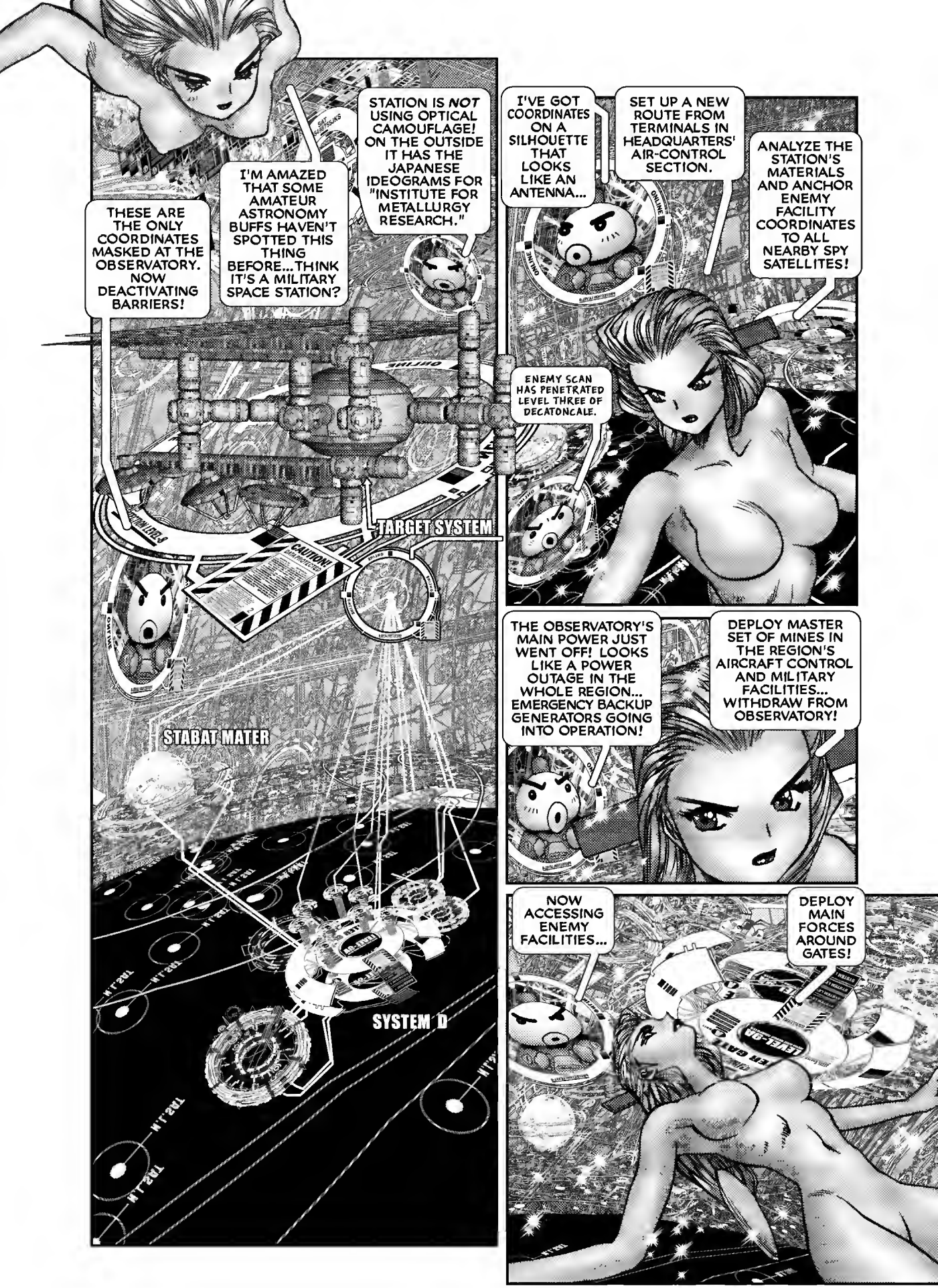
TOY-BOMB: Incorporates parts of compound viruses into small file elements, such as thumbnails or icons. Often included in videogame image files, therefore called "Toy-bomb." Can't be used to deliver complex AI, but has considerable generic function.

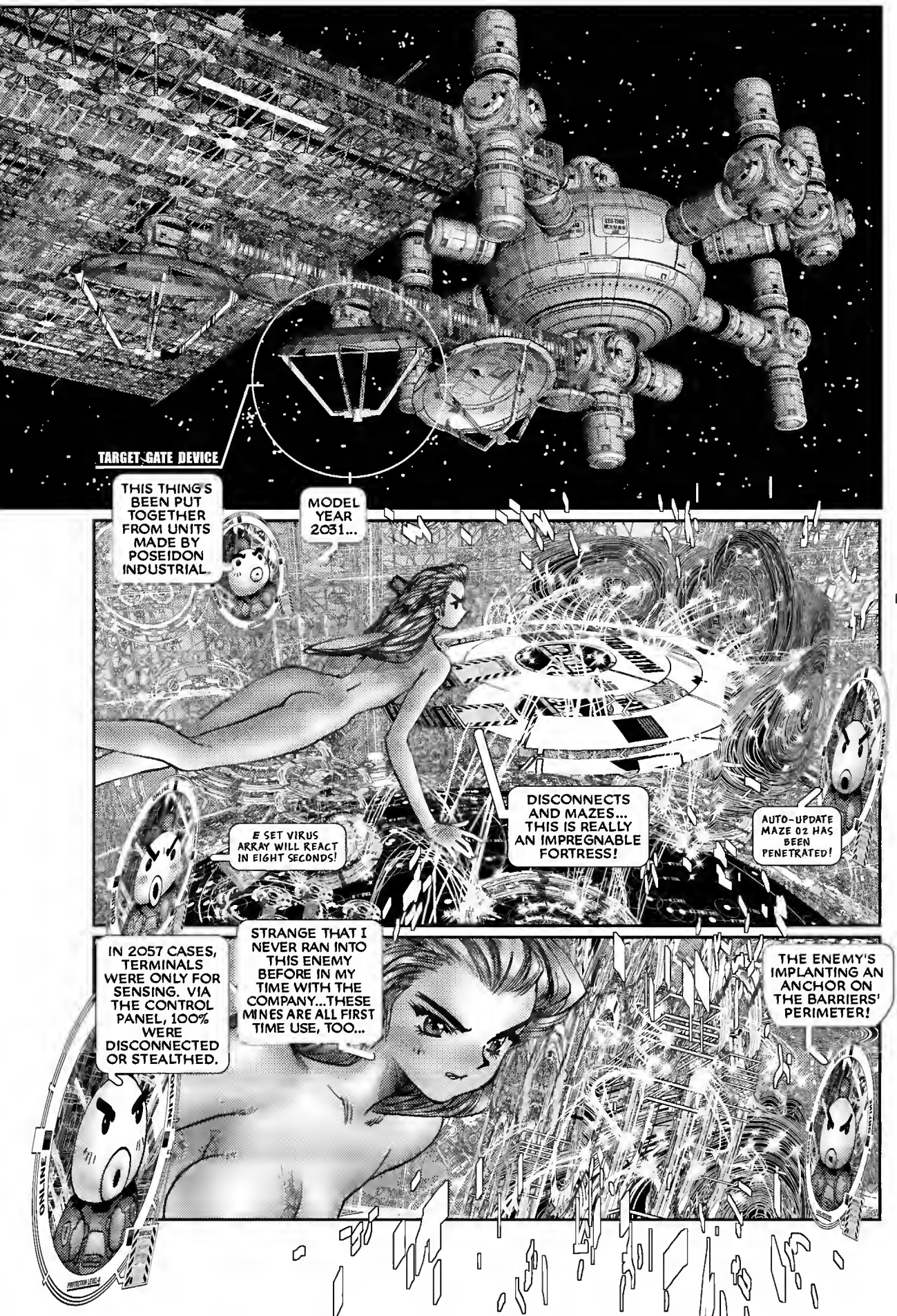
SCANNING STATUS OF ATTACK SATELLITE IS--
ACK!
MAX HAS BEEN FROZEN! FILE DECOMPRESSION--
ACK!
LOKI'S BEEN FROZEN! SEALING HIM OFF!
DANTE! RETURN TO TEAM ONE... INITIATE REPAIR OPS!

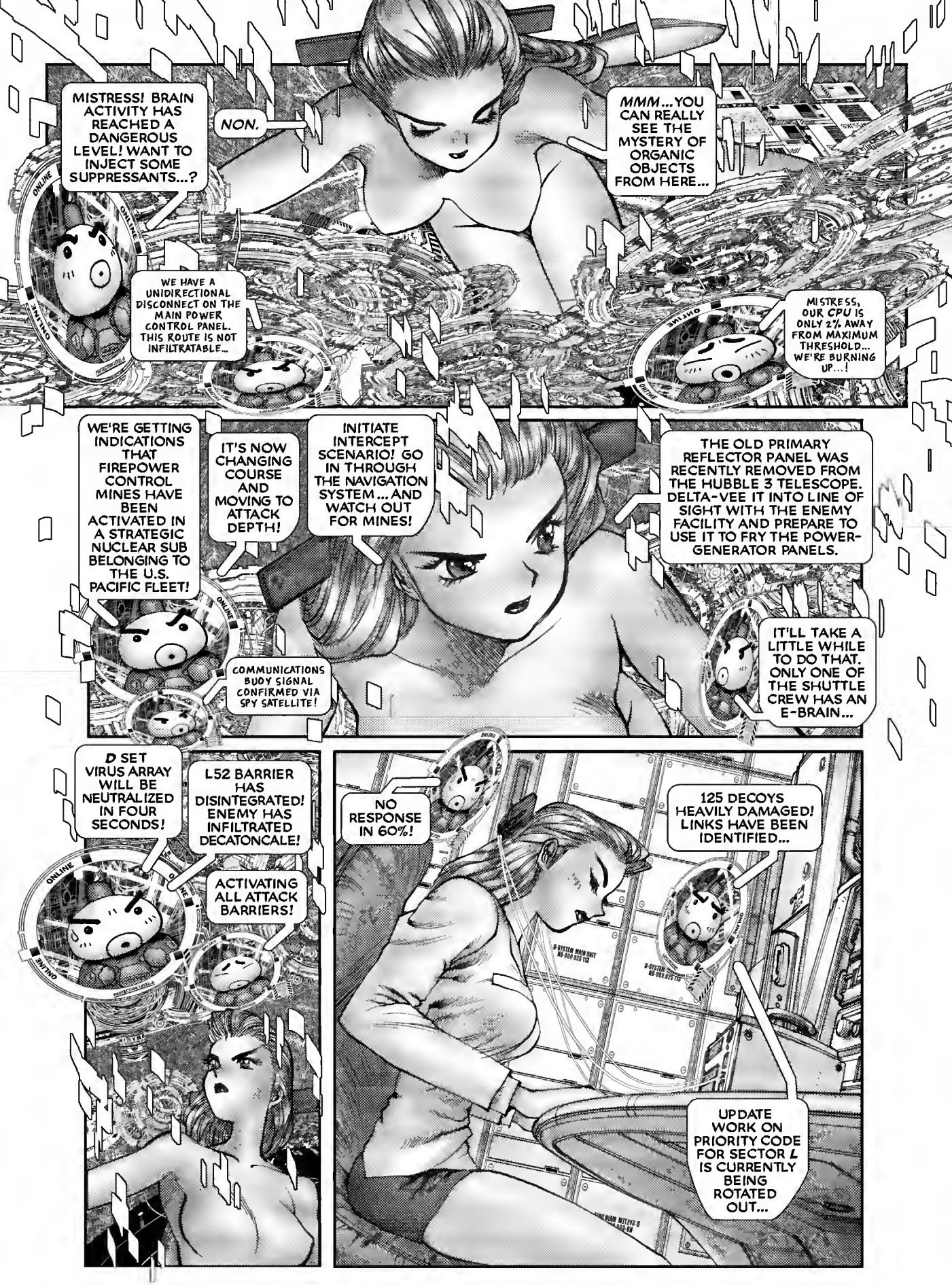

DEAL WITH THE TOY-BOMB HIT REPORT AFTER MAX'S VIRUS HAS BEEN EXTRACTED AND ANALYZED.
RIGHT! I'LL SEAL HIM OFF AND WAIT.

WE'VE DETECTED A FACILITY AT LEO SATELLITE ALTITUDE FROM THE VLA AT MAUNA KEA. IT APPEARS TO BE AN ENEMY OBJECT, A PHYSICAL OBJECT... GENERATING IMAGES...
LEX! PROTECT HANNIBAL'S PERIPHERY!

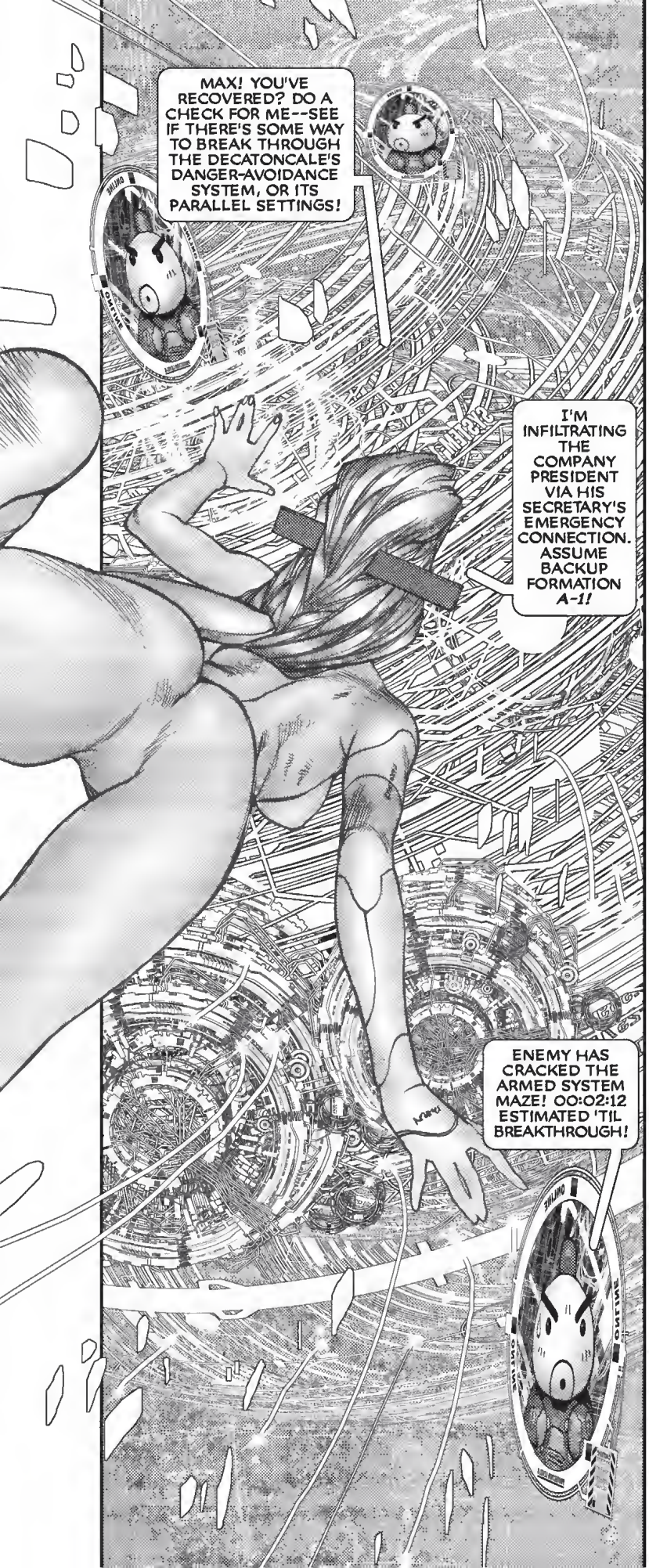

RECORDS RELATING TO TARGET FACILITY CANNOT BE SEARCHED BY REGULAR MEANS... CONTINUING TO SCAN SHUTTLE FUELING AND OTHER DATA...
ONLINE
IMAGE GENERATION COMPLETED!
PROTECTION LEVEL-B
HAWAII : top of Mt.MAUNAKEA

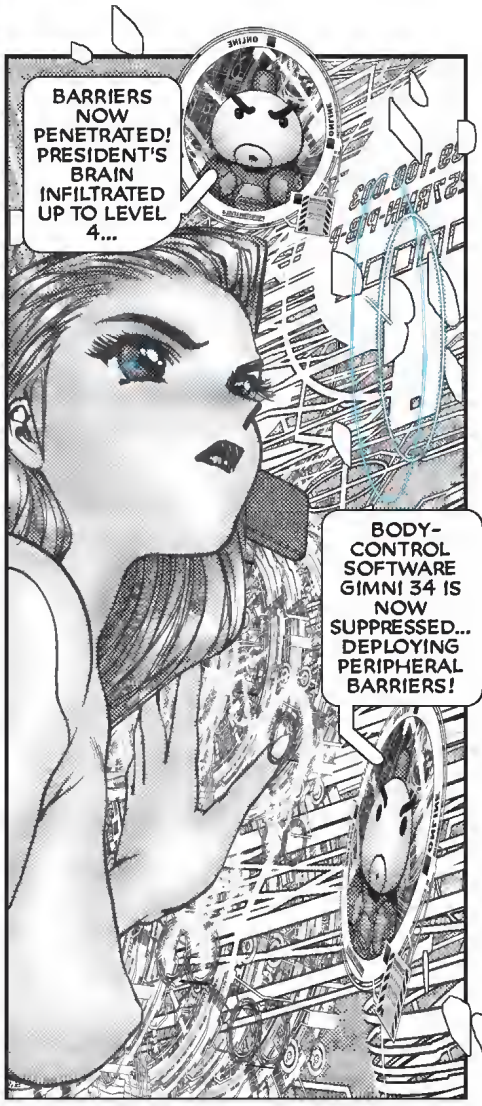

THESE ARE THE ONLY COORDINATES MASKED AT THE OBSERVATORY. NOW DEACTIVATING BARRIERS!
I'M AMAZED THAT SOME AMATEUR ASTRONOMY BUFFS HAVEN'T SPOTTED THIS THING BEFORE...THINK IT'S A MILITARY SPACE STATION?
STATION IS NOT USING OPTICAL CAMOUFLAGE! ON THE OUTSIDE IT HAS THE JAPANESE IDEOGRAMS FOR "INSTITUTE FOR METALLURGY RESEARCH."
TARGET SYSTEM
STABAT MATER
SYSTEM D
I'VE GOT COORDINATES ON A SILHOUETTE THAT LOOKS LIKE AN ANTENNA...
SET UP A NEW ROUTE FROM TERMINALS IN HEADQUARTERS' AIR-CONTROL SECTION.
ANALYZE THE STATION'S MATERIALS AND ANCHOR ENEMY FACILITY COORDINATES TO ALL NEARBY SPY SATELLITES!
ENEMY SCAN HAS PENETRATED LEVEL THREE OF DECATONCALE.
THE OBSERVATORY'S MAIN POWER JUST WENT OFF! LOOKS LIKE A POWER OUTAGE IN THE WHOLE REGION... EMERGENCY BACKUP GENERATORS GOING INTO OPERATION!
DEPLOY MASTER SET OF MINES IN THE REGION'S AIRCRAFT CONTROL AND MILITARY FACILITIES... WITHDRAW FROM OBSERVATORY!
NOW ACCESSING ENEMY FACILITIES...
DEPLOY MAIN FORCES AROUND GATES!

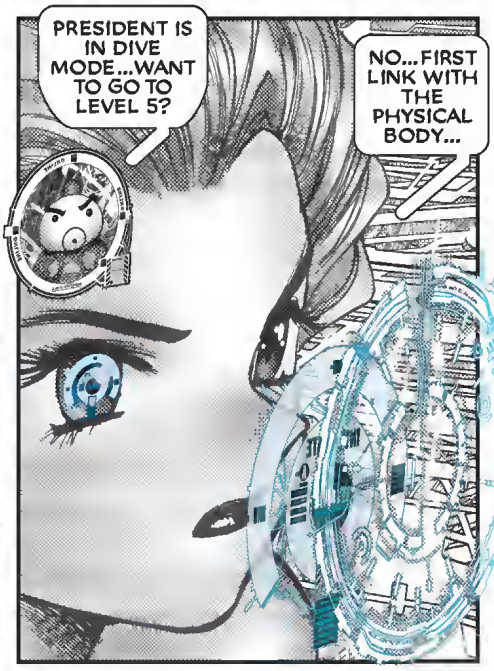

TARGET GATE DEVICE
THIS THING'S BEEN PUT TOGETHER FROM UNITS MADE BY POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL.
MODEL YEAR 2031...
E SET VIRUS ARRAY WILL REACT IN EIGHT SECONDS!
DISCONNECTS AND MAZES... THIS IS REALLY AN IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS!
AUTO-UPDATE MAZE 02 HAS BEEN PENETRATED!
IN 2057 CASES, TERMINALS WERE ONLY FOR SENSING. VIA THE CONTROL PANEL, 100% WERE DISCONNECTED OR STEALTHED.
STRANGE THAT I NEVER RAN INTO THIS ENEMY BEFORE IN MY TIME WITH THE COMPANY...THESE MINES ARE ALL FIRST TIME USE, TOO...
THE ENEMY'S IMPLANTING AN ANCHOR ON THE BARRIERS' PERIMETER!
ONLINE
PROTECTION LEVEL-4


MISTRESS! BRAIN ACTIVITY HAS REACHED A DANGEROUS LEVEL! WANT TO INJECT SOME SUPPRESSANTS...?
NON.
MMM... YOU CAN REALLY SEE THE MYSTERY OF ORGANIC OBJECTS FROM HERE...
WE HAVE A UNIDIRECTIONAL DISCONNECT ON THE MAIN POWER CONTROL PANEL. THIS ROUTE IS NOT INFILTRATABLE...
MISTRESS, OUR CPU IS ONLY 2% AWAY FROM MAXIMUM THRESHOLD... WE'RE BURNING UP...!
WE'RE GETTING INDICATIONS THAT FIREPOWER CONTROL MINES HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED IN A STRATEGIC NUCLEAR SUB BELONGING TO THE U.S. PACIFIC FLEET!
IT'S NOW CHANGING COURSE AND MOVING TO ATTACK DEPTH!
INITIATE INTERCEPT SCENARIO! GO IN THROUGH THE NAVIGATION SYSTEM... AND WATCH OUT FOR MINES!
THE OLD PRIMARY REFLECTOR PANEL WAS RECENTLY REMOVED FROM THE HUBBLE 3 TELESCOPE. DELTA-VEE IT INTO LINE OF SIGHT WITH THE ENEMY FACILITY AND PREPARE TO USE IT TO FRY THE POWER-GENERATOR PANELS.
COMMUNICATIONS BUOY SIGNAL CONFIRMED VIA SPY SATELLITE!
IT'LL TAKE A LITTLE WHILE TO DO THAT. ONLY ONE OF THE SHUTTLE CREW HAS AN E-BRAIN...
D SET VIRUS ARRAY WILL BE NEUTRALIZED IN FOUR SECONDS!
L52 BARRIER HAS DISINTEGRATED! ENEMY HAS INFILTRATED DECATONCALE!
ACTIVATING ALL ATTACK BARRIERS!
NO RESPONSE IN 60%!
125 DECOYS HEAVILY DAMAGED! LINKS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED...
UPDATE WORK ON PRIORITY CODE FOR SECTOR L IS CURRENTLY BEING ROTATED OUT...

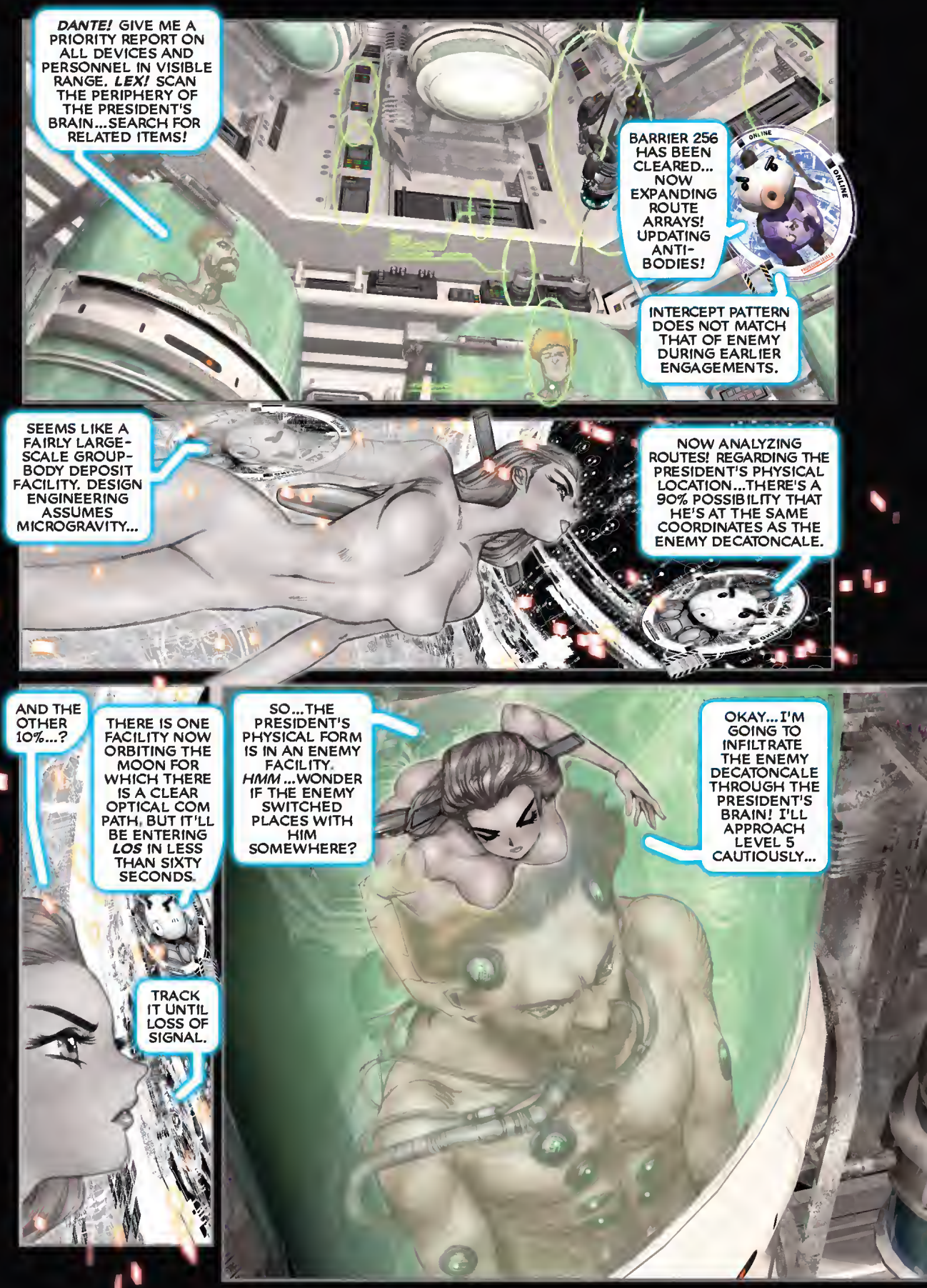
WHRMMMBB
AHH?!
ENEMY ATTACK-BARRIERS HAVE FUSED WITH ANTIBODIES AND PIERCED OUR BARRIERS! SECOND ARMED CONTROL SYSTEM IS CONTAMINATED!
VREEE
SHK
CHAK
KLIK
SHIK
CHAK
DISCONNECT TERMINALS! VALKYRIE! START RESTORATION WORK!
SMEE
WHOO
HMM...TO CREATE A HIDDEN DECATONCALE AND PROCURE BLACK SHUTTLE LAUNCHES... NO ONE COULD CARRY OUT ILLEGAL ACTS ON THIS SCALE...
...UNLESS THEY CONTROLLED ONE OF THE COMPANY'S TOP EXECUTIVES.
BUT MA'AM... REMEMBER, IT WAS THE PRESIDENT, SPECIFICALLY, WHO THE ENEMY ATTACKED!
YES. THERE'S A STRONG POSSIBILITY OF A TRAP, SO THIS IS A ROUTE I'D LIKE TO AVOID...
...BUT WE'RE NOT DEALING WITH SOMEONE HERE WHOSE INVITATION CAN BE IGNORED.
I'LL JUST HAVE TO REPLICATE THE ARMOR THE ENEMY'S BEEN USING UP TO THIS POINT AND PLUNGE IN USING A "MIRROR SHIELD" TACTIC.

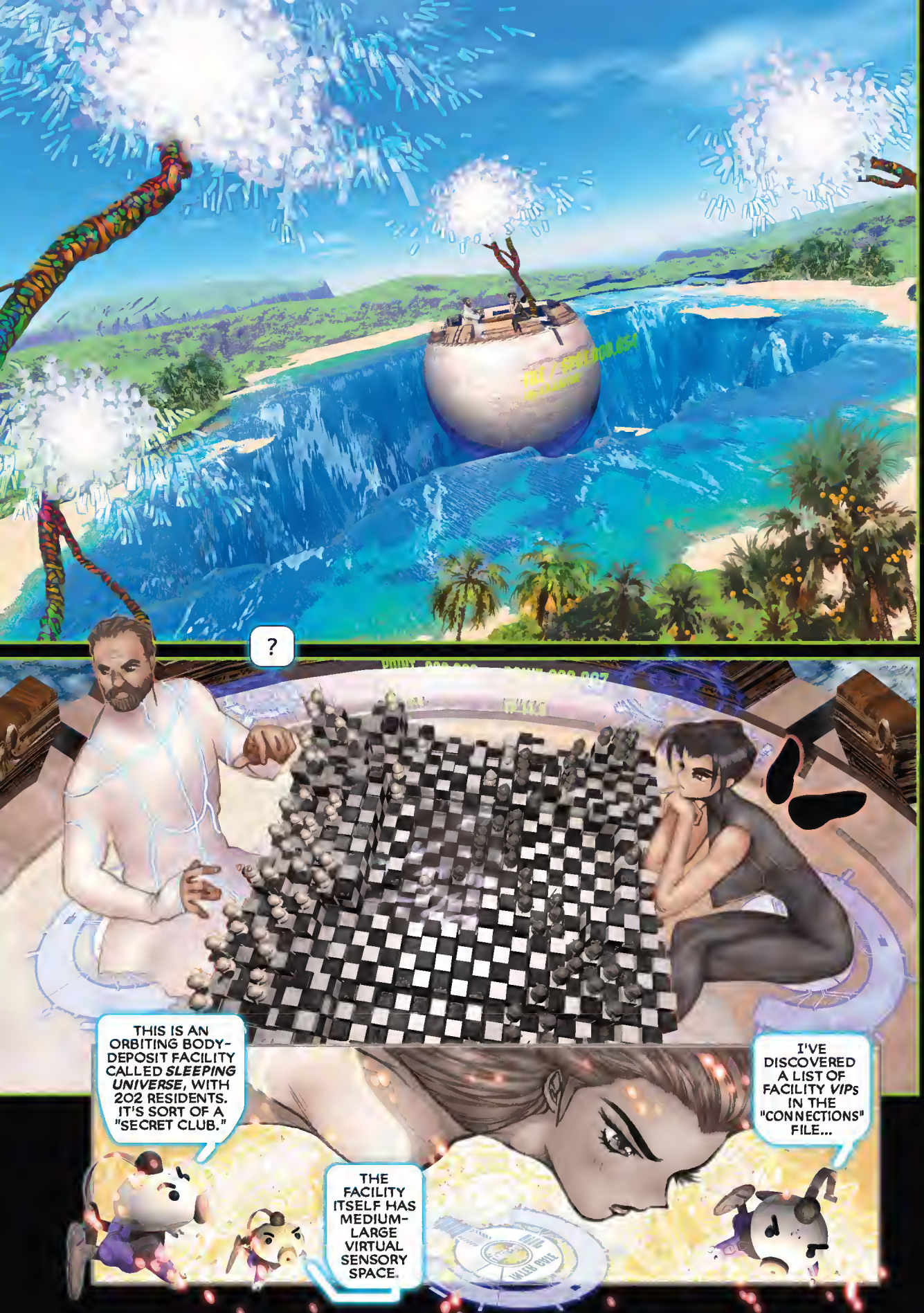

MAX! YOU'VE RECOVERED? DO A CHECK FOR ME--SEE IF THERE'S SOME WAY TO BREAK THROUGH THE DECATONCALE'S DANGER-AVOIDANCE SYSTEM, OR ITS PARALLEL SETTINGS!
I'M INFILTRATING THE COMPANY PRESIDENT VIA HIS SECRETARY'S EMERGENCY CONNECTION. ASSUME BACKUP FORMATION A-1!
ENEMY HAS CRACKED THE ARMED SYSTEM MAZE! 00:02:12 ESTIMATED 'TIL BREAKTHROUGH!

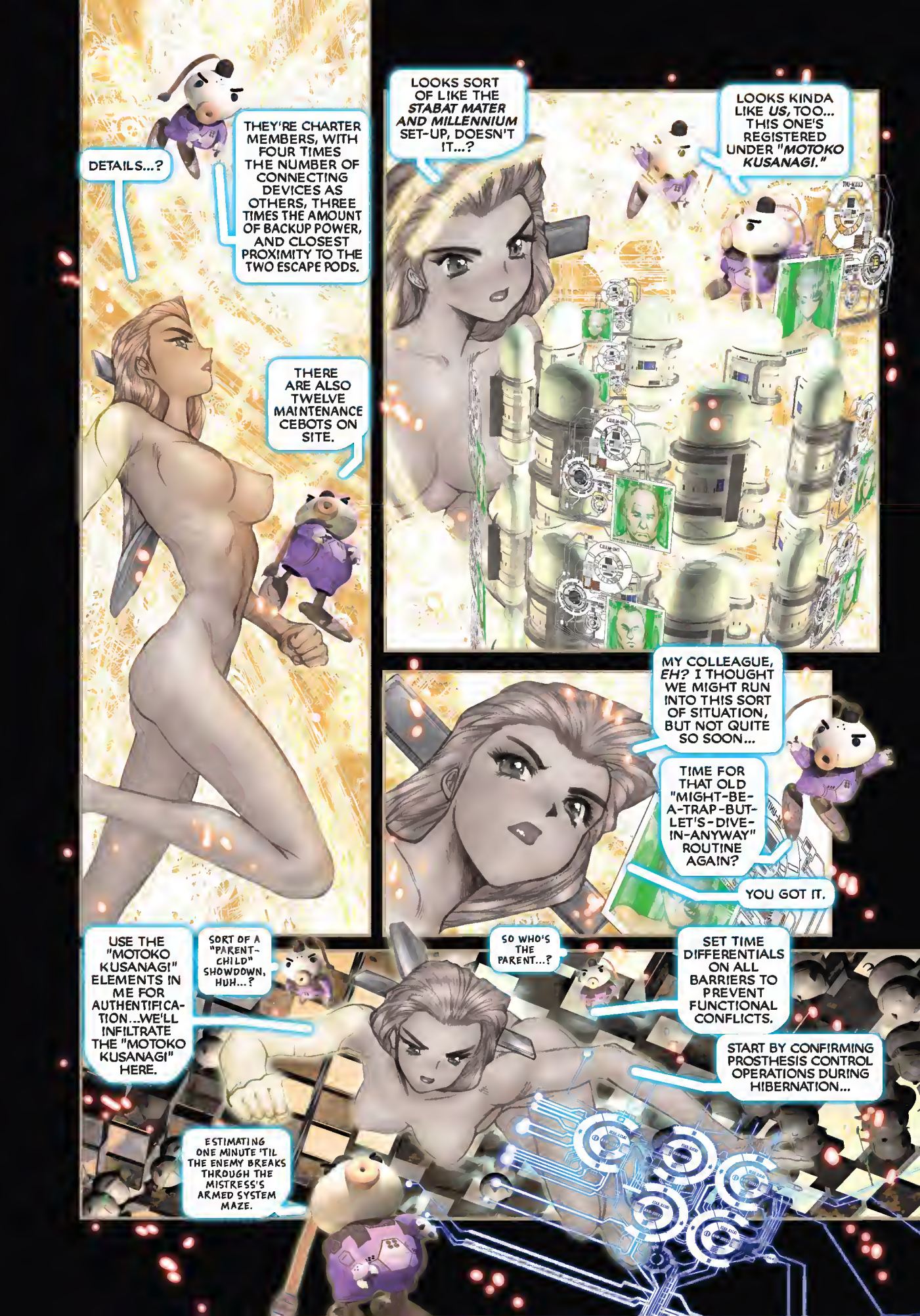

BARRIERS NOW PENETRATED! PRESIDENT'S BRAIN INFILTRATED UP TO LEVEL 4...
BODY-CONTROL SOFTWARE GIMNI 34 IS NOW SUPPRESSED... DEPLOYING PERIPHERAL BARRIERS!


PRESIDENT IS IN DIVE MODE...WANT TO GO TO LEVEL 5?
NO...FIRST LINK WITH THE PHYSICAL BODY...

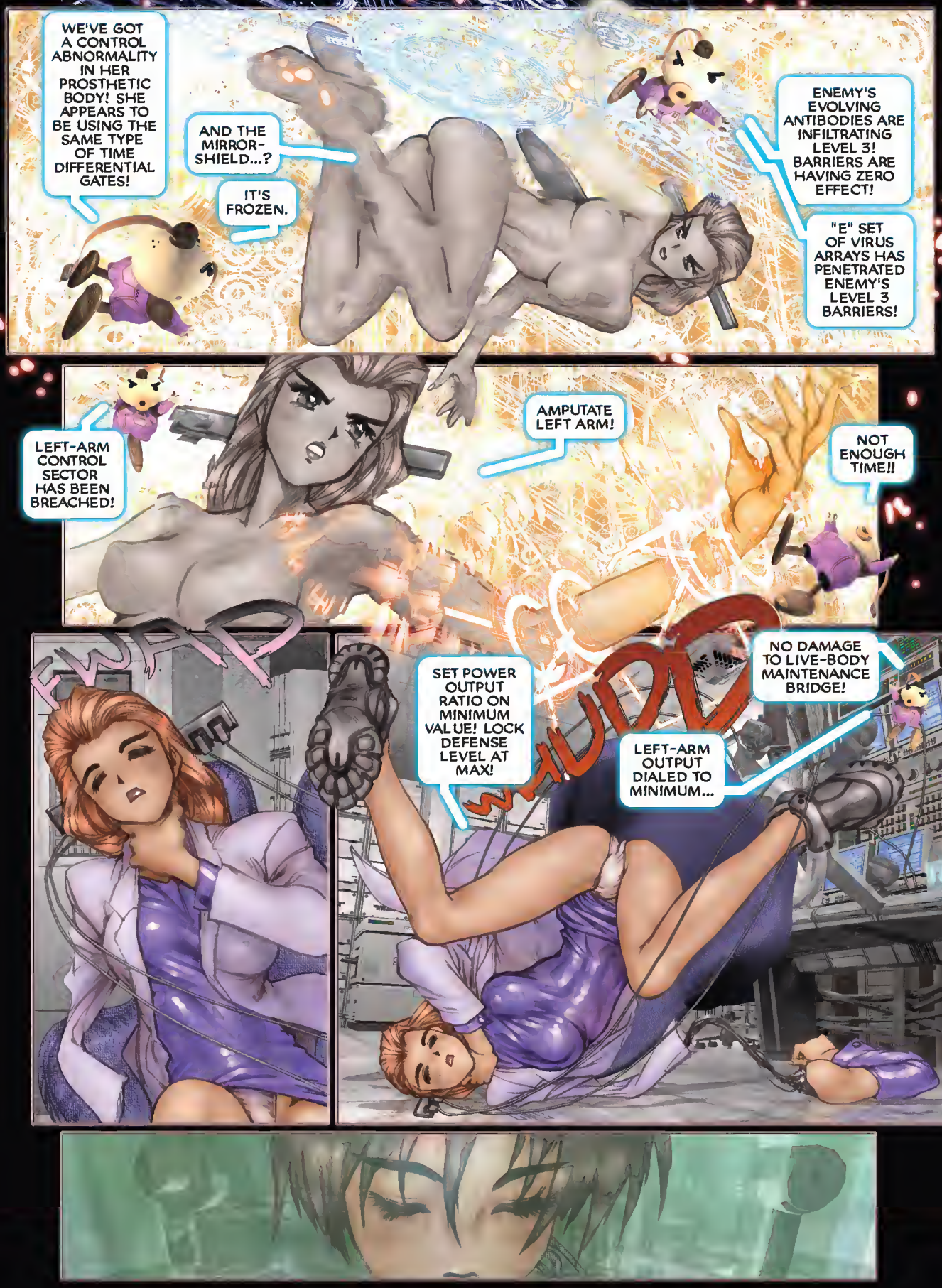
!
NOW CORRECTING SENSORY DEVICES... THEY'RE IN TYPE "H" GEL. IDENTIFYING WITH OLFACTORY AND TASTE SENSES!
MAX...? GIVE PRIORITY TO IMAGE ANALYSIS.
AYE-AYE, SAH!

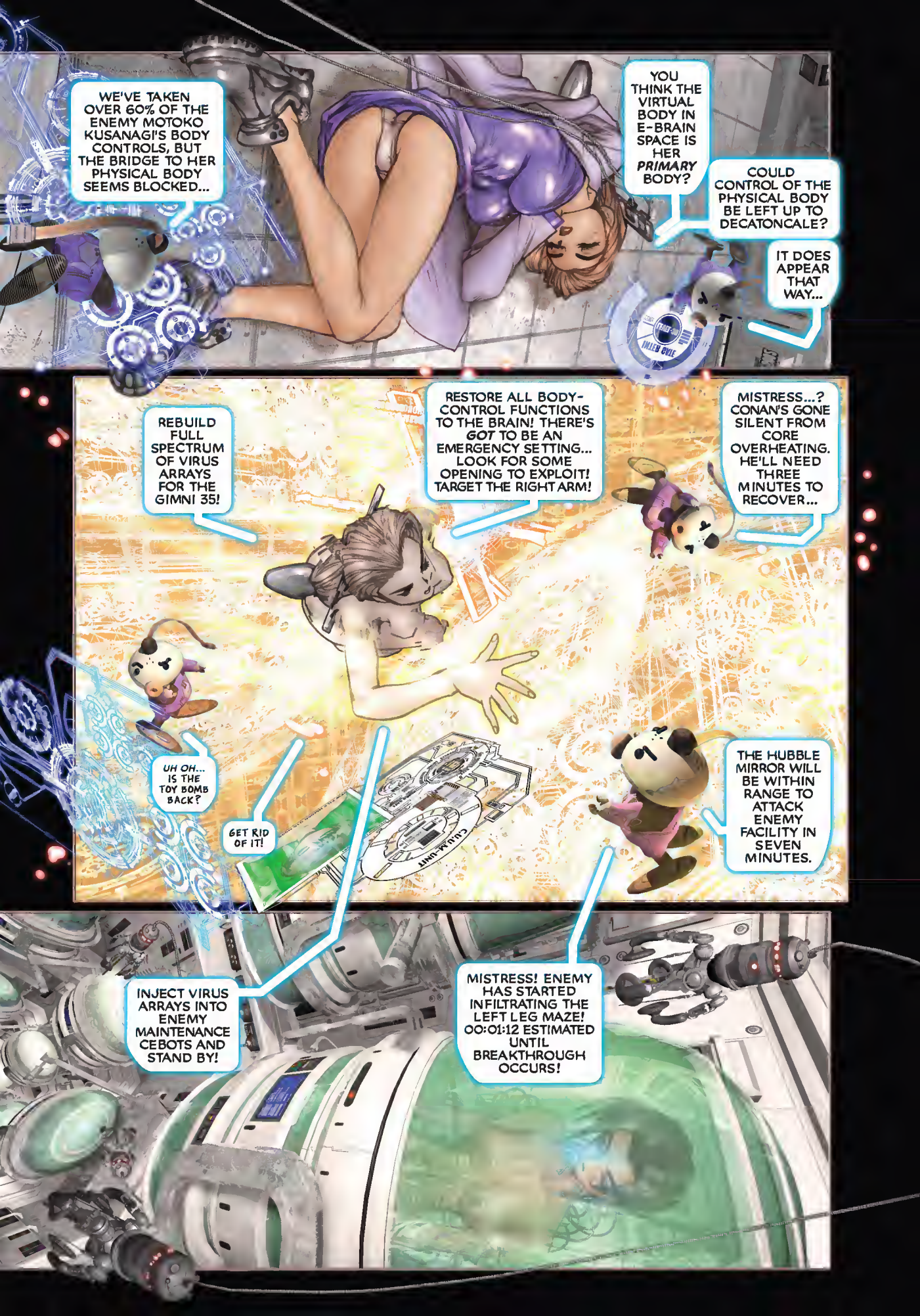

*DANTE!* GIVE ME A PRIORITY REPORT ON ALL DEVICES AND PERSONNEL IN VISIBLE RANGE. *LEX!* SCAN THE PERIPHERY OF THE PRESIDENT'S BRAIN...SEARCH FOR RELATED ITEMS!
BARRIER 256 HAS BEEN CLEARED... NOW EXPANDING ROUTE ARRAYS! UPDATING ANTI-BODIES!
ONLINE
INTERCEPT PATTERN DOES NOT MATCH THAT OF ENEMY DURING EARLIER ENGAGEMENTS.
SEEMS LIKE A FAIRLY LARGE-SCALE GROUP-BODY DEPOSIT FACILITY. DESIGN ENGINEERING ASSUMES MICROGRAVITY...
NOW ANALYZING ROUTES! REGARDING THE PRESIDENT'S PHYSICAL LOCATION...THERE'S A 90% POSSIBILITY THAT HE'S AT THE SAME COORDINATES AS THE ENEMY DECATONCALE.
AND THE OTHER 10%...?
THERE IS ONE FACILITY NOW ORBITING THE MOON FOR WHICH THERE IS A CLEAR OPTICAL COM PATH, BUT IT'LL BE ENTERING *LOS* IN LESS THAN SIXTY SECONDS.
TRACK IT UNTIL LOSS OF SIGNAL.
SO...THE PRESIDENT'S PHYSICAL FORM IS IN AN ENEMY FACILITY. *HMM*...WONDER IF THE ENEMY SWITCHED PLACES WITH HIM SOMEWHERE?
OKAY...I'M GOING TO INFILTRATE THE ENEMY DECATONCALE THROUGH THE PRESIDENT'S BRAIN! I'LL APPROACH LEVEL 5 CAUTIOUSLY...

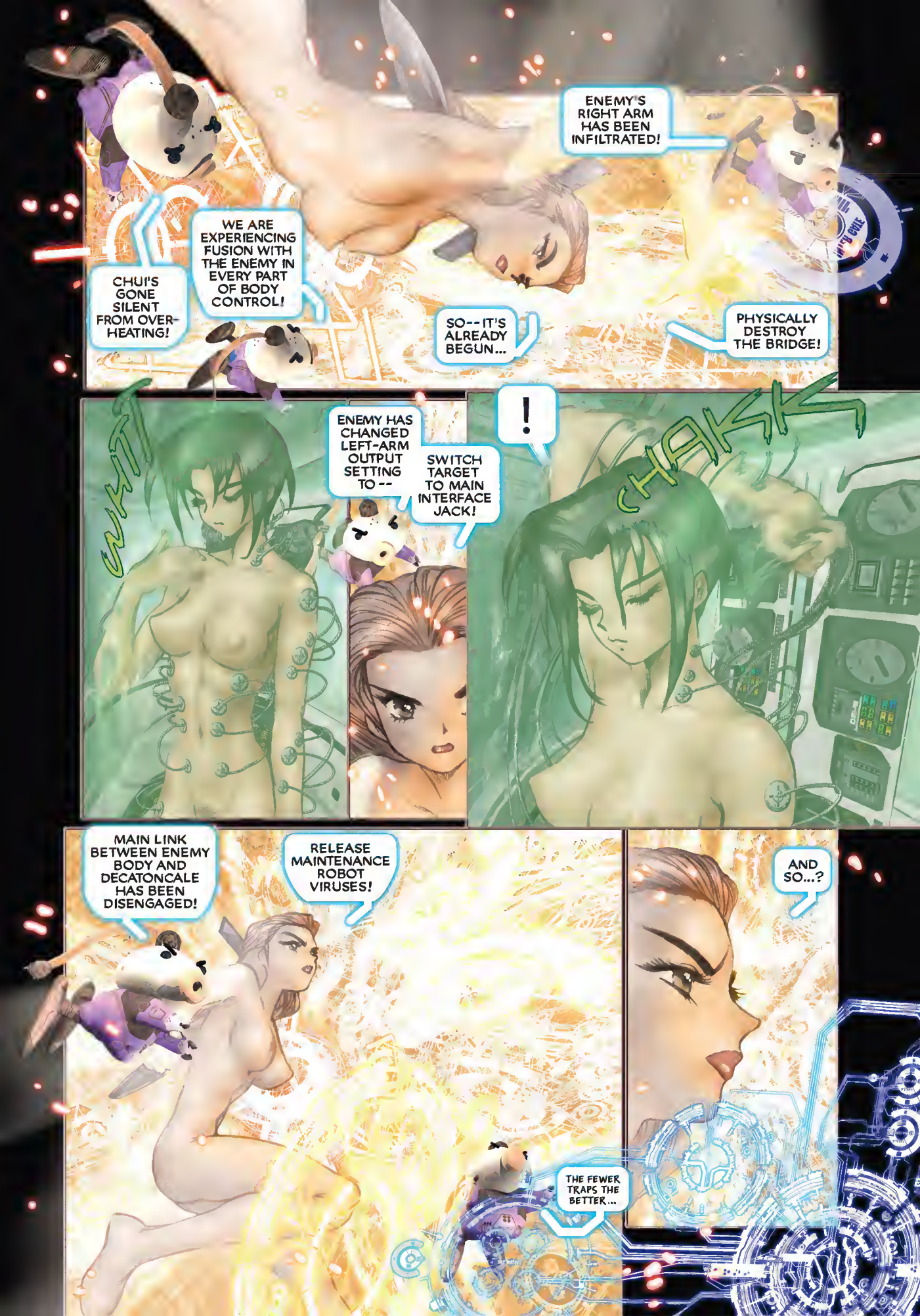

?
THIS IS AN ORBITING BODY-DEPOSIT FACILITY CALLED *SLEEPING UNIVERSE*, WITH 202 RESIDENTS. IT'S SORT OF A "SECRET CLUB."
THE FACILITY ITSELF HAS MEDIUM-LARGE VIRTUAL SENSORY SPACE.
I'VE DISCOVERED A LIST OF FACILITY *VIP*s IN THE "CONNECTIONS" FILE...

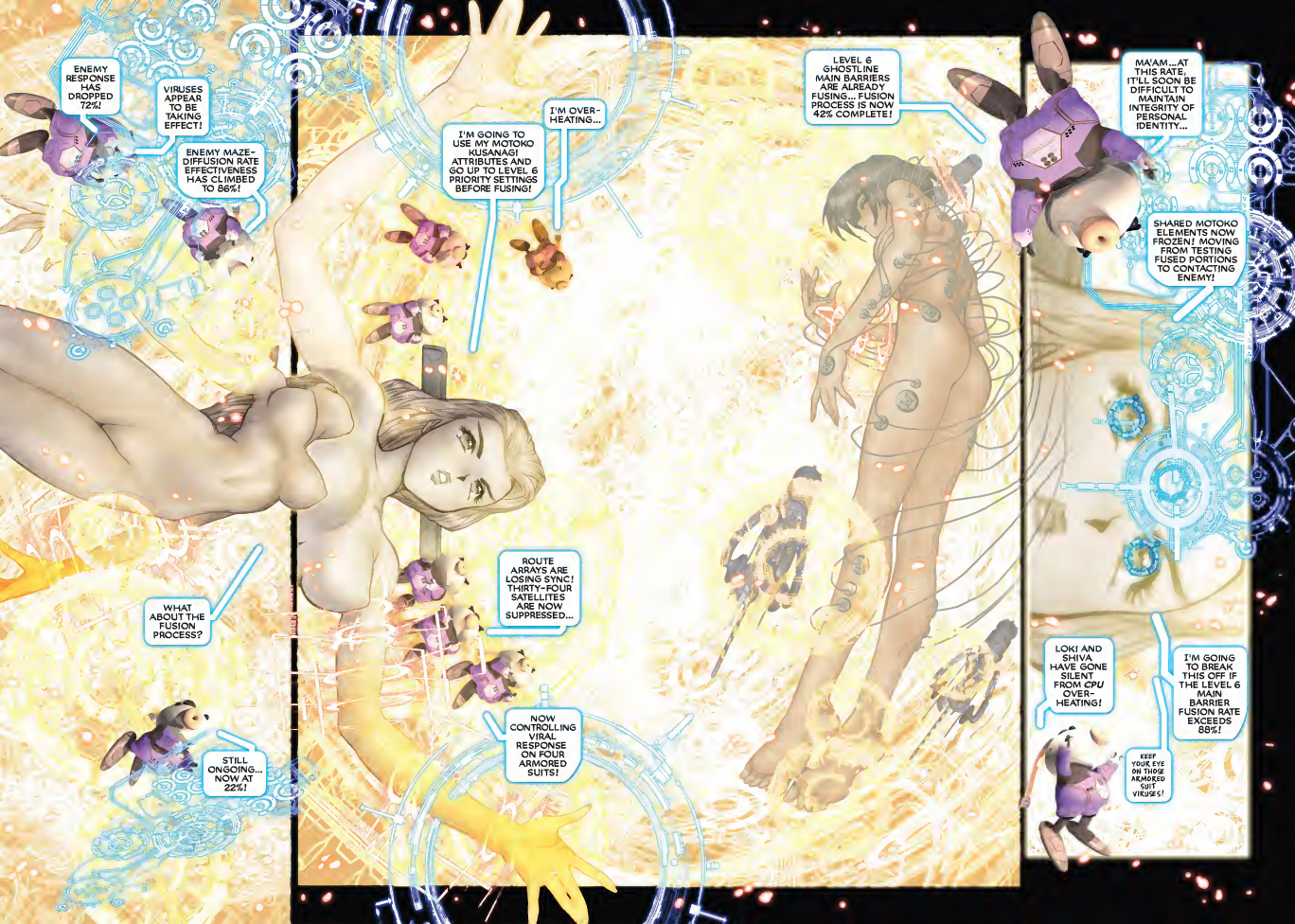

DETAILS...?
THEY'RE CHARTER MEMBERS, WITH FOUR TIMES THE NUMBER OF CONNECTING DEVICES AS OTHERS, THREE TIMES THE AMOUNT OF BACKUP POWER, AND CLOSEST PROXIMITY TO THE TWO ESCAPE PODS.
THERE ARE ALSO TWELVE MAINTENANCE CEBOTS ON SITE.
LOOKS SORT OF LIKE THE *STABAT MATER AND MILLENNIUM* SET-UP, DOESN'T IT...?
LOOKS KINDA LIKE *US*, TOO... THIS ONE'S REGISTERED UNDER "*MOTOKO KUSANAGI.*"
MY COLLEAGUE, *EH?* I THOUGHT WE MIGHT RUN INTO THIS SORT OF SITUATION, BUT NOT QUITE SO SOON...
TIME FOR THAT OLD "MIGHT-BE-A-TRAP-BUT-LET'S-DIVE-IN-ANYWAY" ROUTINE AGAIN?
YOU GOT IT.
USE THE "MOTOKO KUSANAGI" ELEMENTS IN ME FOR AUTHENTIFICATION...WE'LL INFILTRATE THE "MOTOKO KUSANAGI" HERE.
SORT OF A "PARENT-CHILD" SHOWDOWN, HUH...?
SO WHO'S THE PARENT...?
SET TIME DIFFERENTIALS ON ALL BARRIERS TO PREVENT FUNCTIONAL CONFLICTS.
START BY CONFIRMING PROSTHESIS CONTROL OPERATIONS DURING HIBERNATION...
ESTIMATING ONE MINUTE 'TIL THE ENEMY BREAKS THROUGH THE MISTRESS'S ARMED SYSTEM MAZE.

!
WE'VE GOT A STAGE 1 FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT! ATTACK-BARRIER ARRAY JACKET IS COLLAPSING! PERIPHERY IS CONTAMINATED!
ENEMY HAS WITHDRAWN FROM ARMED SYSTEM MAZE!
CONCENTRATE DEPLOYMENT OF TIME DIFFERENTIAL GATES ON LEVEL 3'S PERIPHERY! CONTROL THE ARRAYS!
REBUILD THE JACKET!
CAUTION!
SYSTEM ERROR

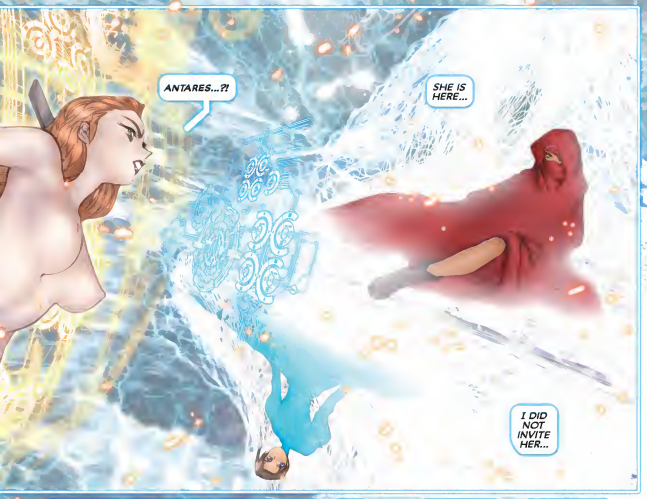

WE'VE GOT A CONTROL ABNORMALITY IN HER PROSTHETIC BODY! SHE APPEARS TO BE USING THE SAME TYPE OF TIME DIFFERENTIAL GATES!
AND THE MIRROR-SHIELD...?
IT'S FROZEN.
ENEMY'S EVOLVING ANTIBODIES ARE INFILTRATING LEVEL 3! BARRIERS ARE HAVING ZERO EFFECT!
"E" SET OF VIRUS ARRAYS HAS PENETRATED ENEMY'S LEVEL 3 BARRIERS!
LEFT-ARM CONTROL SECTOR HAS BEEN BREACHED!
AMPUTATE LEFT ARM!
NOT ENOUGH TIME!!
FWPP
SHUDD
SET POWER OUTPUT RATIO ON MINIMUM VALUE! LOCK DEFENSE LEVEL AT MAX!
LEFT-ARM OUTPUT DIALED TO MINIMUM...
NO DAMAGE TO LIVE-BODY MAINTENANCE BRIDGE!

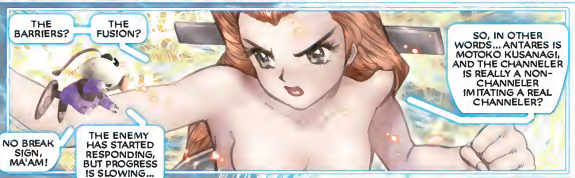

WE'VE TAKEN OVER 60% OF THE ENEMY MOTOKO KUSANAGI'S BODY CONTROLS, BUT THE BRIDGE TO HER PHYSICAL BODY SEEMS BLOCKED...
YOU THINK THE VIRTUAL BODY IN E-BRAIN SPACE IS HER *PRIMARY* BODY?
COULD CONTROL OF THE PHYSICAL BODY BE LEFT UP TO DECATONCALE?
IT DOES APPEAR THAT WAY...
REBUILD FULL SPECTRUM OF VIRUS ARRAYS FOR THE GIMNI 35!
RESTORE ALL BODY-CONTROL FUNCTIONS TO THE BRAIN! THERE'S *GOT* TO BE AN EMERGENCY SETTING... LOOK FOR SOME OPENING TO EXPLOIT! TARGET THE RIGHT ARM!
MISTRESS...? CONAN'S GONE SILENT FROM CORE OVERHEATING. HE'LL NEED THREE MINUTES TO RECOVER...
UH OH... IS THE TOY BOMB BACK?
GET RID OF IT!
THE HUBBLE MIRROR WILL BE WITHIN RANGE TO ATTACK ENEMY FACILITY IN SEVEN MINUTES.
INJECT VIRUS ARRAYS INTO ENEMY MAINTENANCE CEBOTS AND STAND BY!
MISTRESS! ENEMY HAS STARTED INFILTRATING THE LEFT LEG MAZE! 00:01:12 ESTIMATED UNTIL BREAKTHROUGH OCCURS!

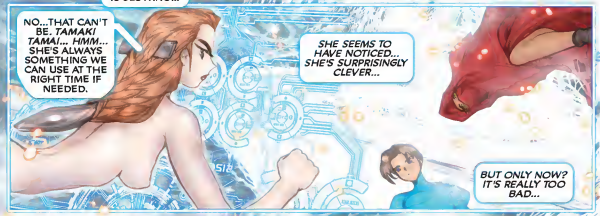

ENEMY'S RIGHT ARM HAS BEEN INFILTRATED!
WE ARE EXPERIENCING FUSION WITH THE ENEMY IN EVERY PART OF BODY CONTROL!
CHUI'S GONE SILENT FROM OVER-HEATING!
SO--IT'S ALREADY BEGUN...
PHYSICALLY DESTROY THE BRIDGE!
ENEMY HAS CHANGED LEFT-ARM OUTPUT SETTING TO --
SWITCH TARGET TO MAIN INTERFACE JACK!
!
CHAKK
MAIN LINK BETWEEN ENEMY BODY AND DECATONCALE HAS BEEN DISENGAGED!
RELEASE MAINTENANCE ROBOT VIRUSES!
AND SO...?
THE FEWER TRAPS THE BETTER...

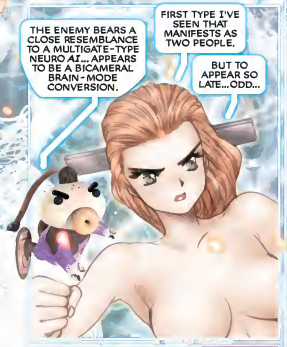

ENEMY RESPONSE HAS DROPPED 72%!
VIRUSES APPEAR TO BE TAKING EFFECT!
ENEMY MAZE-DIFFUSION RATE EFFECTIVENESS HAS CLIMBED TO 86%!
I'M GOING TO USE MY MOTOKO KUSANAGI ATTRIBUTES AND GO UP TO LEVEL 6 PRIORITY SETTINGS BEFORE FUSING!
I'M OVER-HEATING...
LEVEL 6 GHOSTLINE MAIN BARRIERS ARE ALREADY FUSING... FUSION PROCESS IS NOW 42% COMPLETE!
MA'AM...AT THIS RATE, IT'LL SOON BE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN INTEGRITY OF PERSONAL IDENTITY...
SHARED MOTOKO ELEMENTS NOW FROZEN! MOVING FROM TESTING FUSED PORTIONS TO CONTACTING ENEMY!
WHAT ABOUT THE FUSION PROCESS?
ROUTE ARRAYS ARE LOSING SYNC! THIRTY-FOUR SATELLITES ARE NOW SUPPRESSED...
NOW CONTROLLING VIRAL RESPONSE ON FOUR ARMORED SUITS!
STILL ONGOING... NOW AT 22%!
LOKI AND SHIVA HAVE GONE SILENT FROM CPU OVER-HEATING!
I'M GOING TO BREAK THIS OFF IF THE LEVEL 6 MAIN BARRIER FUSION RATE EXCEEDS 88%!
KEEP YOUR EYE ON THOSE ARMORED SUIT VIRUSES!

Actually, when you go through an e-brain's deep-level ghostline, people wouldn't be this visually identifiable (especially with their clothes on...but maybe "real" ghosts could wear clothes if they were cremated or buried with them on?). I just tried to show that Motoko senses things this way. And of course I was worried that maybe I was drawing just a *little* too much exposed flesh here...

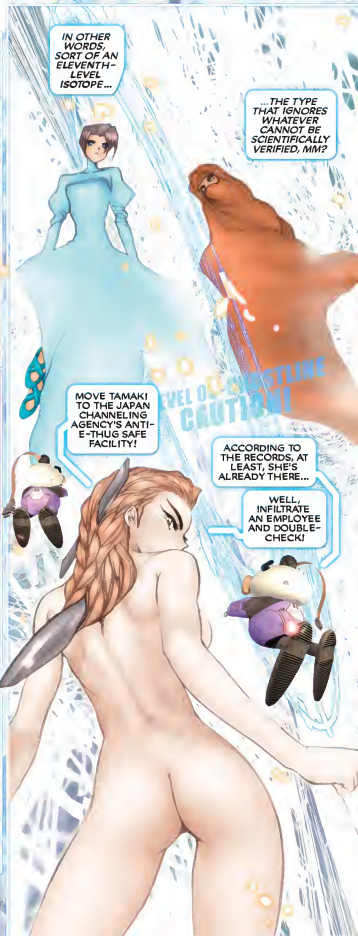


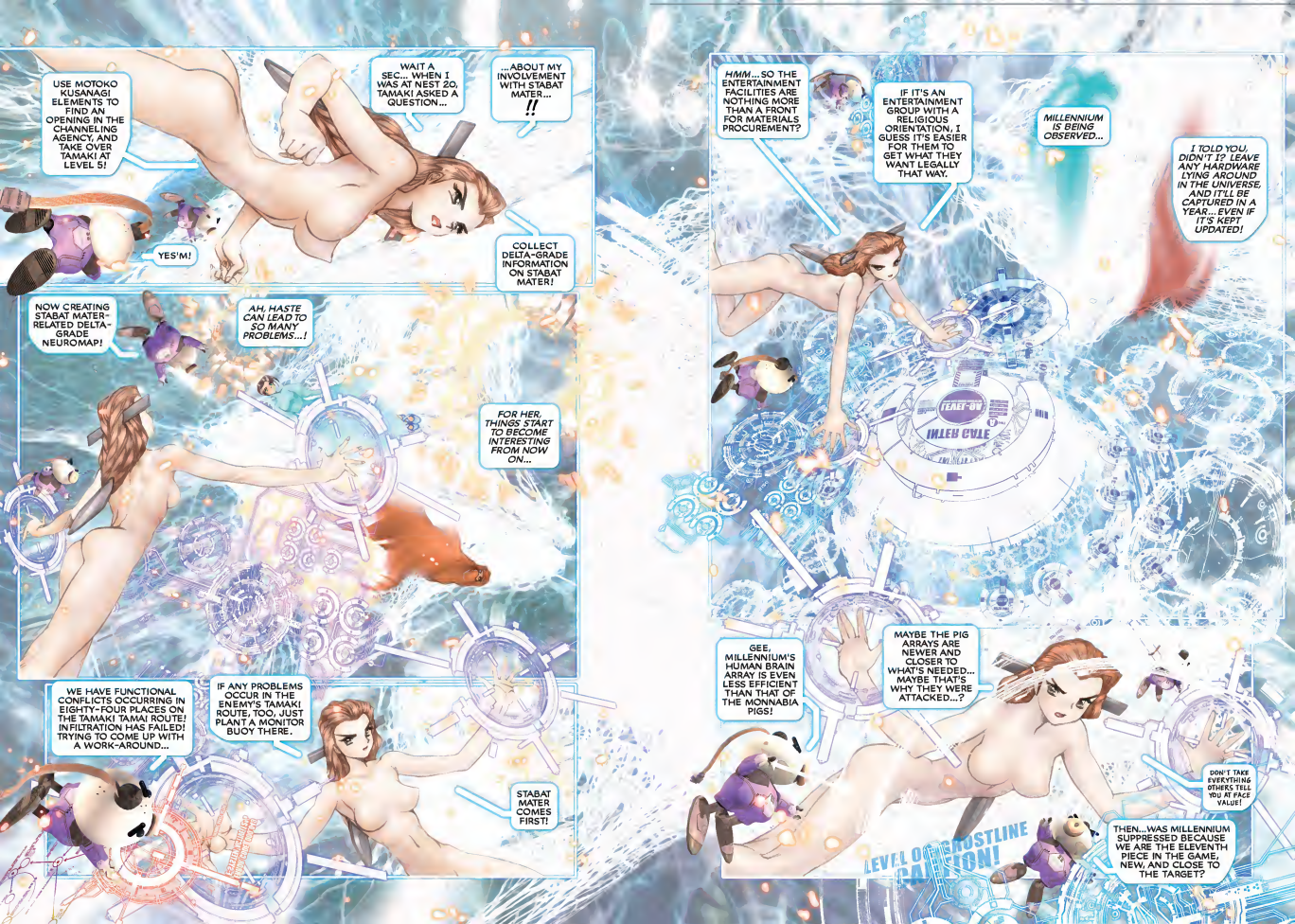



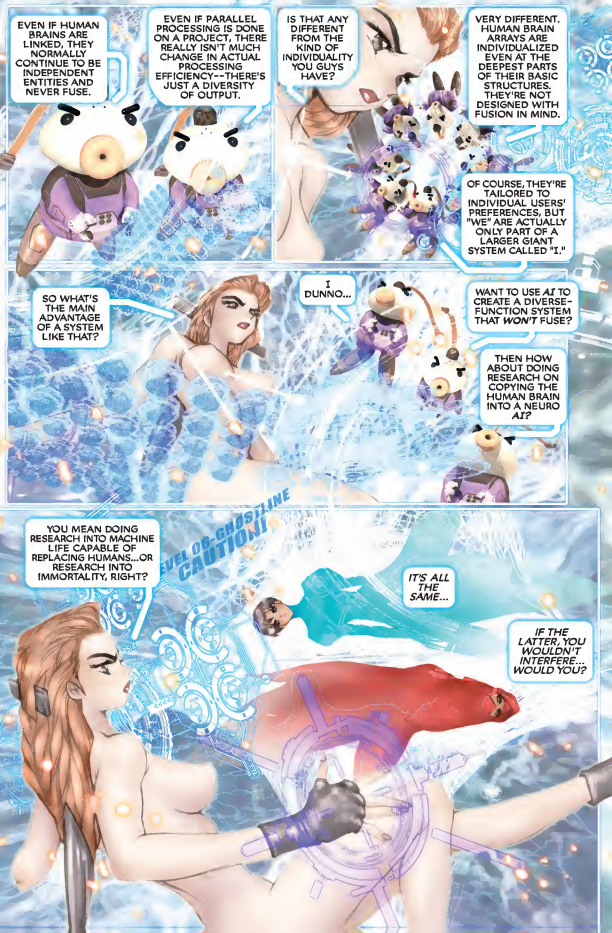



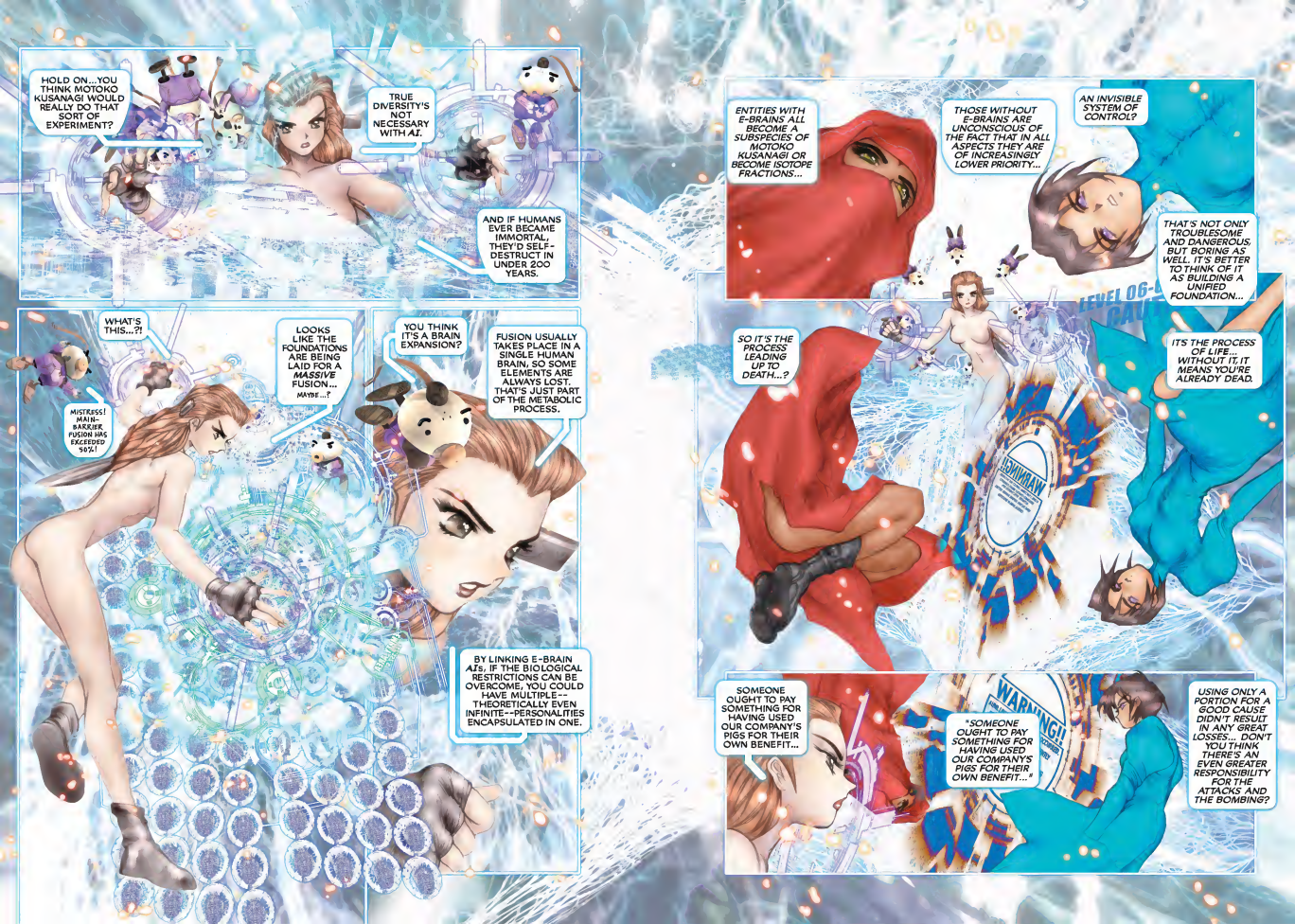
If I were to indicate them "Orion"-style, using Japanese characters, I'd write "Antares" as "Darkness-Hanging-Child" and "Spica" as "Original element-Light".



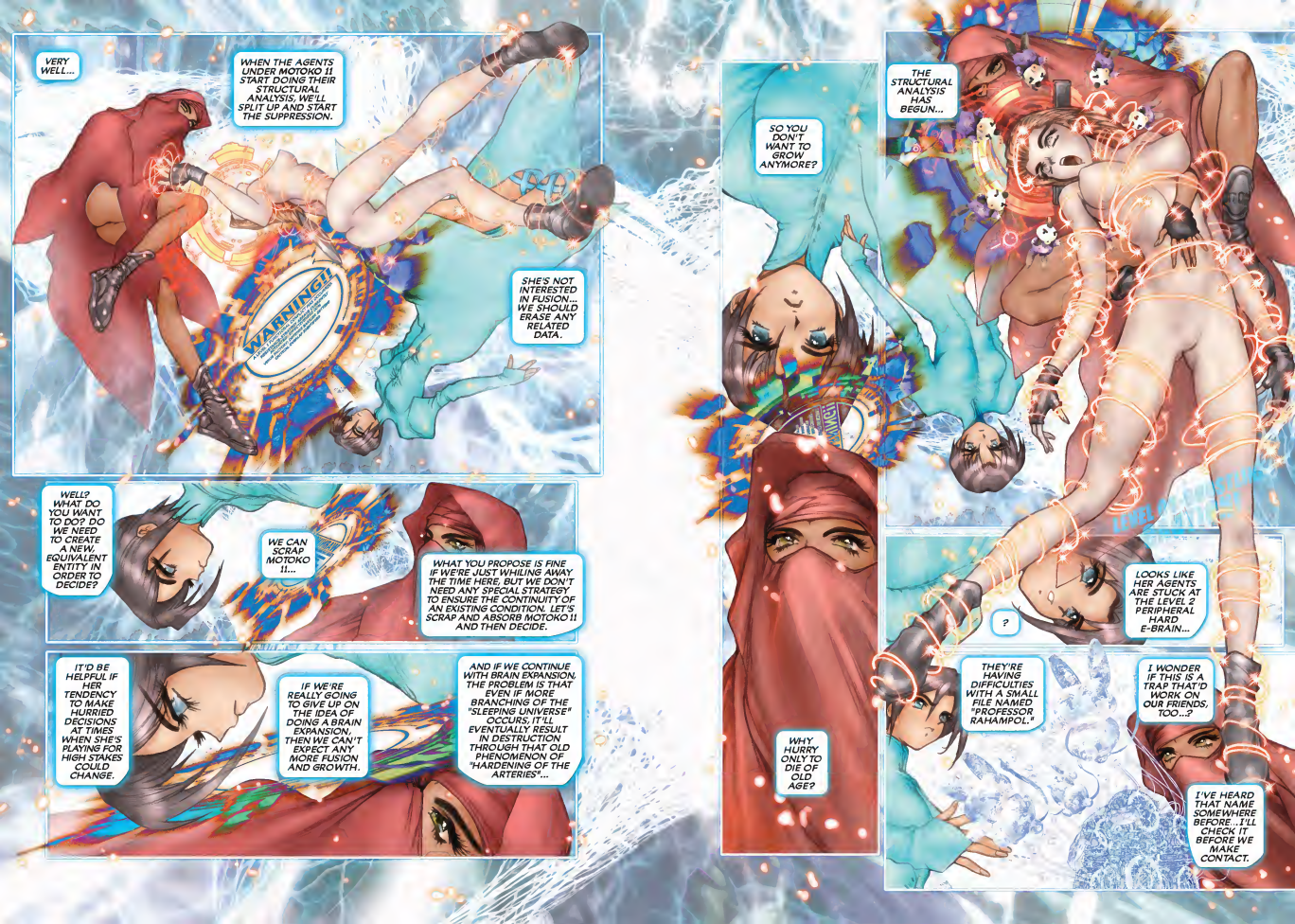

USE MOTOKO KUSANAGI ELEMENTS TO FIND AN OPENING IN THE CHANNELING AGENCY, AND TAKE OVER TAMAKI AT LEVEL 5!
YES'M!
WAIT A SEC... WHEN I WAS AT NEST 20, TAMAKI ASKED A QUESTION...
...ABOUT MY INVOLVEMENT WITH STABAT MATER...
!!
COLLECT DELTA-GRADE INFORMATION ON STABAT MATER!
NOW CREATING STABAT MATER-RELATED DELTA-GRADE NEUROMAP!
AH. HASTE CAN LEAD TO SO MANY PROBLEMS...!
FOR HER, THINGS START TO BECOME INTERESTING FROM NOW ON...
WE HAVE FUNCTIONAL CONFLICTS OCCURRING IN EIGHTY-FOUR PLACES ON THE TAMAKI TAMAI ROUTE! INFILTRATION HAS FAILED! TRYING TO COME UP WITH A WORK-AROUND...
IF ANY PROBLEMS OCCUR IN THE ENEMY'S TAMAKI ROUTE, TOO, JUST PLANT A MONITOR BUOY THERE.
STABAT MATER COMES FIRST!
HMM... SO THE ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES ARE NOTHING MORE THAN A FRONT FOR MATERIALS PROCUREMENT?
IF IT'S AN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP WITH A RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION, I GUESS IT'S EASIER FOR THEM TO GET WHAT THEY WANT LEGALLY THAT WAY.
MILLENNIUM IS BEING OBSERVED...
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? LEAVE ANY HARDWARE LYING AROUND IN THE UNIVERSE, AND IT'LL BE CAPTURED IN A YEAR... EVEN IF IT'S KEPT UPDATED!
GEE. MILLENNIUM'S HUMAN BRAIN ARRAY IS EVEN LESS EFFICIENT THAN THAT OF THE MONNABIA PIGS!
MAYBE THE PIG ARRAYS ARE NEWER AND CLOSER TO WHAT'S NEEDED... MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY WERE ATTACKED...?
DON'T TAKE EVERYTHING OTHERS TELL YOU AT FACE VALUE!
THEN...WAS MILLENNIUM SUPPRESSED BECAUSE WE ARE THE ELEVENTH PIECE IN THE GAME, NEW, AND CLOSE TO THE TARGET?
LEVEL OF GHOSTLINE PASSION!

GIVE ME THE PIG-ARRAY NEUROMAP!
YES'M!
THE ARMED-ARRAY LINK HAS BEEN RESTORED!
GOOD!
HMM...THIS ISN'T ONE OF THOSE MILLENNIUM-STYLE CENTRALIZED-COMMAND TYPES. SEARCH FOR THE OVERALL CONTROL SYSTEM!
EVERY UNIT HAS EXACTLY THE SAME PARALLEL SETTINGS, MA'AM.
BUT SURELY THESE CAN'T BE RANDOM LINKS...
...
...
WHEN I ASKED EARLIER "WHY THE PIGS?"...YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT IT BEING MAYBE "BECAUSE THEY'RE FUN," RIGHT?
LESSEE... RIGHT...THAT WAS WHAT WE SAID ON MARCH 6, 2035, AT 12:42:32 ~35.
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?
INTELLIGENT AI's LIKE US ARE AN UNUSUAL EXISTENCE IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE, EVEN ALLOWING FOR ERRORS IN LANGUAGE, AND OS TERMINALS.
THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF HARDWARE TERMINALS AND THE DISTANCES BETWEEN THEM ARE ONLY VISUAL PHENOMENA.
HMM... KEEP GOING...

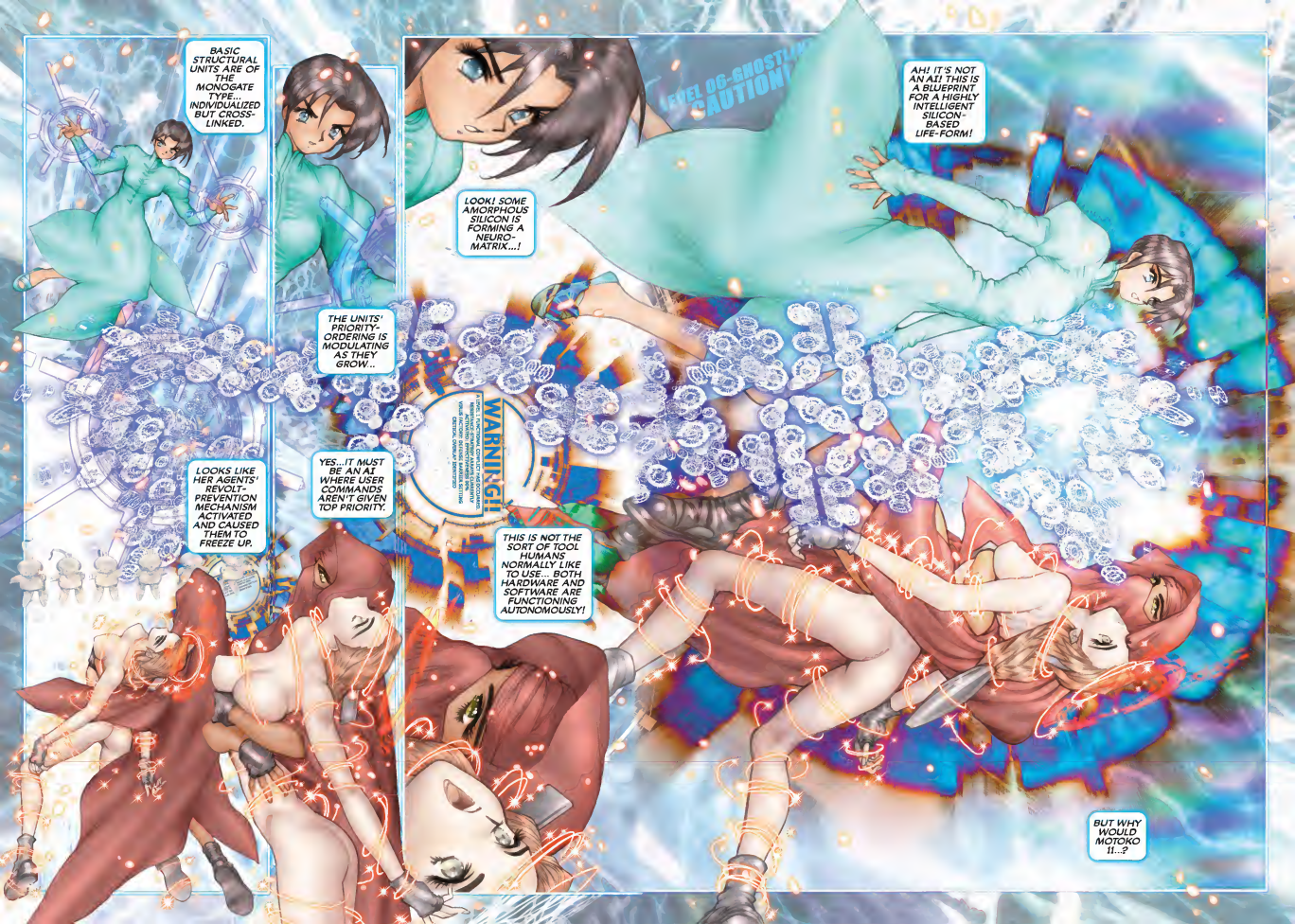

EVEN IF HUMAN BRAINS ARE LINKED, THEY NORMALLY CONTINUE TO BE INDEPENDENT ENTITIES AND NEVER FUSE.
EVEN IF PARALLEL PROCESSING IS DONE ON A PROJECT, THERE REALLY ISN'T MUCH CHANGE IN ACTUAL PROCESSING EFFICIENCY--THERE'S JUST A DIVERSITY OF OUTPUT.
IS THAT ANY DIFFERENT FROM THE KIND OF INDIVIDUALITY YOU GUYS HAVE?
VERY DIFFERENT. HUMAN BRAIN ARRAYS ARE INDIVIDUALIZED EVEN AT THE DEEPEST PARTS OF THEIR BASIC STRUCTURES. THEY'RE NOT DESIGNED WITH FUSION IN MIND.
OF COURSE, THEY'RE TAILORED TO INDIVIDUAL USERS' PREFERENCES, BUT "WE" ARE ACTUALLY ONLY PART OF A LARGER GIANT SYSTEM CALLED "I."
SO WHAT'S THE MAIN ADVANTAGE OF A SYSTEM LIKE THAT?
I DUNNO...
WANT TO USE AI TO CREATE A DIVERSE-FUNCTION SYSTEM THAT WON'T FUSE?
THEN HOW ABOUT DOING RESEARCH ON COPYING THE HUMAN BRAIN INTO A NEURO AI?
YOU MEAN DOING RESEARCH INTO MACHINE LIFE CAPABLE OF REPLACING HUMANS...OR RESEARCH INTO IMMORTALITY, RIGHT?
LEVEL 08-GHASTLINE CAUTION!!
IT'S ALL THE SAME...
IF THE LATTER, YOU WOULDN'T INTERFERE... WOULD YOU?

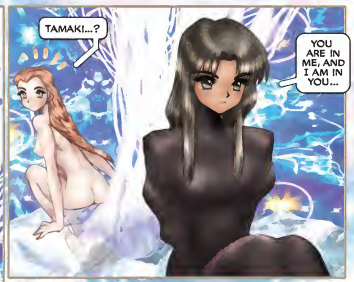

HOLD ON...YOU THINK MOTOKO KUSANAGI WOULD REALLY DO THAT SORT OF EXPERIMENT?
TRUE DIVERSITY'S NOT NECESSARY WITH AI.
AND IF HUMANS EVER BECAME IMMORTAL, THEY'D SELF-DESTRUCT IN UNDER 200 YEARS.
WHAT'S THIS...?!
MISTRESS! MAIN-BARRIER FUSION HAS EXCEEDED 50%!
LOOKS LIKE THE FOUNDATIONS ARE BEING LAID FOR A MASSIVE FUSION...
MAYBE...?
YOU THINK IT'S A BRAIN EXPANSION?
FUSION USUALLY TAKES PLACE IN A SINGLE HUMAN BRAIN, SO SOME ELEMENTS ARE ALWAYS LOST. THAT'S JUST PART OF THE METABOLIC PROCESS.
BY LINKING E-BRAIN AIs, IF THE BIOLOGICAL RESTRICTIONS CAN BE OVERCOME, YOU COULD HAVE MULTIPLE--THEORETICALLY EVEN INFINITE--PERSONALITIES ENCAPSULATED IN ONE.
ENTITIES WITH E-BRAINS ALL BECOME A SUBSPECIES OF MOTOKO KUSANAGI OR BECOME ISOTOPE FRACTIONS...
THOSE WITHOUT E-BRAINS ARE UNCONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT IN ALL ASPECTS THEY ARE OF INCREASINGLY LOWER PRIORITY...
AN INVISIBLE SYSTEM OF CONTROL?
THAT'S NOT ONLY TROUBLESOME AND DANGEROUS, BUT BORING AS WELL. IT'S BETTER TO THINK OF IT AS BUILDING A UNIFIED FOUNDATION...
SO IT'S THE PROCESS LEADING UP TO DEATH...?
IT'S THE PROCESS OF LIFE... WITHOUT IT, IT MEANS YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.
SOMEONE OUGHT TO PAY SOMETHING FOR HAVING USED OUR COMPANY'S PIGS FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT...
"SOMEONE OUGHT TO PAY SOMETHING FOR HAVING USED OUR COMPANY'S PIGS FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT..."
WARNING!
USING ONLY A PORTION FOR A GOOD CAUSE DIDN'T RESULT IN ANY GREAT LOSSES... DON'T YOU THINK THERE'S AN EVEN GREATER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACKS AND THE BOMBING?

NO. 20 (MILLENNIUM) HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY NO.11 (ARAMAKI), SO THE BRAIN EXPANSION PLANS ARE CALLED OFF
THAT'S A NORMAL DECISION WHEN FUSION ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY SHE SEEMS TO HAVE NO INTENTION OF FUSING...
STRANGE...
WARNING!
SOMETHING'S REALLY WEIRD WITH THE LANGUAGE FIELD HERE. GIVE ME A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE MAIN-BARRIER FUSION!
LEX HAS BEEN FROZEN! MAIN BARRIER FUSION 91%!
WE HAVE AN ABNORMALITY IN THE RIGHT-SIDE HEARING!
RIGHT-SIDE HEARING?
!
WHAT THE--?!
FWUMP!
WE'VE LOST RESPONSE FROM MAIN BARRIERS! OPERATION IS NORMAL!
TIME-DIFFERENTIAL GATES HAVE STOPPED FUNCTIONING! MADE ATTEMPT TO WIPE AND REBUILD, BUT THERE'S NO RESPONSE!
COMBAT MODE SHIFTING TO STANDBY DUE TO LOSS OF TARGETS...
UM... MISTRESS?
WE'RE NOT GETTING ANY COMMANDS... WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
...
...
LET'S DO A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS AS SOON AS THE HARDWARE COOLS TO RECOMMENDED OPERATING TEMPERATURE!
OH, BOY! LET'S!


VERY WELL...
WHEN THE AGENTS UNDER MOTOKO 11 START DOING THEIR STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS, WE'LL SPLIT UP AND START THE SUPPRESSION.
WARNING!!
SHE'S NOT INTERESTED IN FUSION... WE SHOULD ERASE ANY RELATED DATA.
WELL? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? DO WE NEED TO CREATE A NEW, EQUIVALENT ENTITY IN ORDER TO DECIDE?
WE CAN SCRAP MOTOKO 11...
WHAT YOU PROPOSE IS FINE IF WE'RE JUST WHILING AWAY THE TIME HERE. BUT WE DON'T NEED ANY SPECIAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF AN EXISTING CONDITION. LET'S SCRAP AND ABSORB MOTOKO 11 AND THEN DECIDE.
IT'D BE HELPFUL IF HER TENDENCY TO MAKE HURRIED DECISIONS AT TIMES WHEN SHE'S PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES COULD CHANGE.
IF WE'RE REALLY GOING TO GIVE UP ON THE IDEA OF DOING A BRAIN EXPANSION, THEN WE CAN'T EXPECT ANY MORE FUSION AND GROWTH.
AND IF WE CONTINUE WITH BRAIN EXPANSION, THE PROBLEM IS THAT EVEN IF MORE BRANCHING OF THE "SLEEPING UNIVERSE" OCCURS, IT'LL EVENTUALLY RESULT IN DESTRUCTION THROUGH THAT OLD PHENOMENON OF "HARDENING OF THE ARTERIES"...
SO YOU DON'T WANT TO GROW ANYMORE?
WHY HURRY ONLY TO DIE OF OLD AGE?
THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS HAS BEGUN...
?
LOOKS LIKE HER AGENTS ARE STUCK AT THE LEVEL 2 PERIPHERAL HARD E-BRAIN...
THEY'RE HAVING DIFFICULTIES WITH A SMALL FILE NAMED "PROFESSOR RAHAMPOL."
I WONDER IF THIS IS A TRAP THAT'D WORK ON OUR FRIENDS, TOO...?
I'VE HEARD THAT NAME SOMEWHERE BEFORE...I'LL CHECK IT BEFORE WE MAKE CONTACT.

THERE DON'T APPEAR TO BE ANY SPECIAL ATTACK BARRIERS...AND I DON'T SEE ANY RESPONSE FROM THE DECOYS...
PROFESSOR RAHAMPOL... FAMOUS IN THE FIELD OF BIO-ENGINEERING. HMM... HE JUST DIED RECENTLY...
WONDER IF THERE'S SOMETHING IN THAT FILE THAT CAUSES SUPPORT-AI LIKE HER AGENTS TO FREEZE...?
AS LONG AS THERE'S NO DAMAGE TO MOTOKO 11, IT'LL BE NO PROBLEM FOR ME, EITHER.
EVEN IF IT'S A DESPERATE ATTEMPT AT A TRAP?
WELL, UNLESS WE DO SOMETHING, WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS AND DO THE SUPPRESSION.
?? IS THIS SOME KIND OF A PHILOSOPHY TEXT FOR ALIENS?
NO... LOOKS LIKE A SYSTEM BLUEPRINT.
YOU THINK THAT WOULD CAUSE AN AI LOCKUP?
LEVEL 06-GHOSTLINE CAUTION!
THINK WE SHOULD TRY ACTIVATING IT VIRTUALLY?
I'M GOING TO ANALYZE IT.
MAYBE THAT'S WHAT THE AGENTS DID...
NOW WHAT...?!
IT'S GROWING.
LOOKS LIKE A TYPE OF AI.


BASIC STRUCTURAL UNITS ARE OF THE MONOGATE TYPE... INDIVIDUALIZED BUT CROSS-LINKED.
THE UNITS' PRIORITY-ORDERING IS MODULATING AS THEY GROW..
LOOKS LIKE HER AGENTS' REVOLT-PREVENTION MECHANISM ACTIVATED AND CAUSED THEM TO FREEZE UP.
YES..IT MUST BE AN AI WHERE USER COMMANDS AREN'T GIVEN TOP PRIORITY.
LEVEL 06-GHOST LIMIT
CAUTION
WARNING!!
LOOK! SOME AMORPHOUS SILICON IS FORMING A NEURO-MATRIX...!
THIS IS NOT THE SORT OF TOOL HUMANS NORMALLY LIKE TO USE.. BOTH HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE ARE FUNCTIONING AUTONOMOUSLY!
AH! IT'S NOT AN AI! THIS IS A BLUEPRINT FOR A HIGHLY INTELLIGENT SILICON-BASED LIFE-FORM!
BUT WHY WOULD MOTOKO I1...?

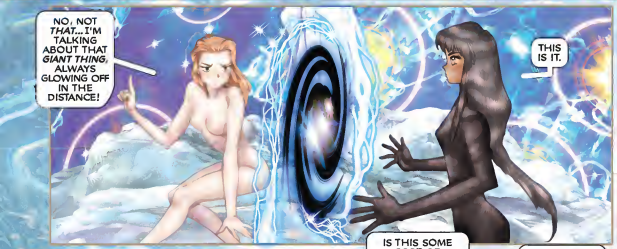

TAMAKI...?
YOU ARE IN ME, AND I AM IN YOU...

YOU CHOOSE THE REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR...
...BECAUSE THE UNIVERSE IS ASYMMETRICAL.

ARE WE IMPRISONED...?
IMPRISONED...? WHICH OF "US"...?

I CAN'T LOCATE THE "NORTH STARS"...
THEY'RE OVER HERE.

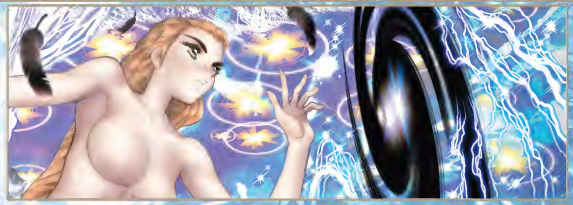
THEY'VE BEEN HERE FROM THE BEGINNING.
HERE'S THE HORIZON POINT YOU THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO ACCESS...

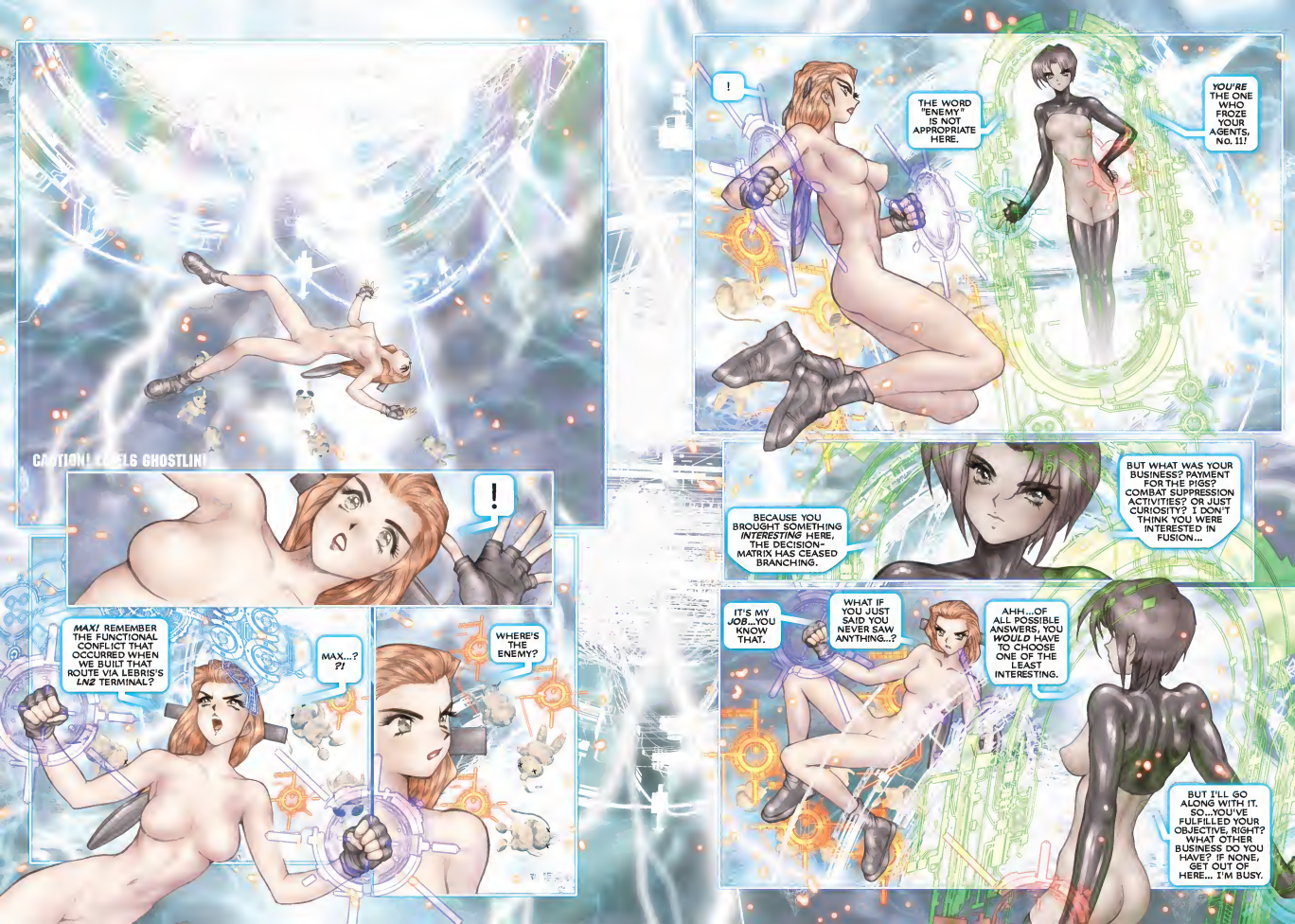

NO, NOT *THAT*... I'M TALKING ABOUT THAT *GIANT THING*, ALWAYS GLOWING OFF IN THE DISTANCE!
THIS IS IT.

IF YOU CONTACT ONE LIGHT, YOU'LL PERCEIVE A NEW HORIZON.
IF YOU CONTACT ALL THREE LIGHTS, YOU'LL CONTINUE ON TO SOMEONE ON THE BORDER...

IS THIS SOME SORT OF PARADOXICAL "RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX"...? OR ARE YOU JUST TESTING THE DEPTHS OF MY DESIRE?
NO, I'M ONLY PROVIDING THE DATA... YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAS TO CHOOSE YOUR COURSE.

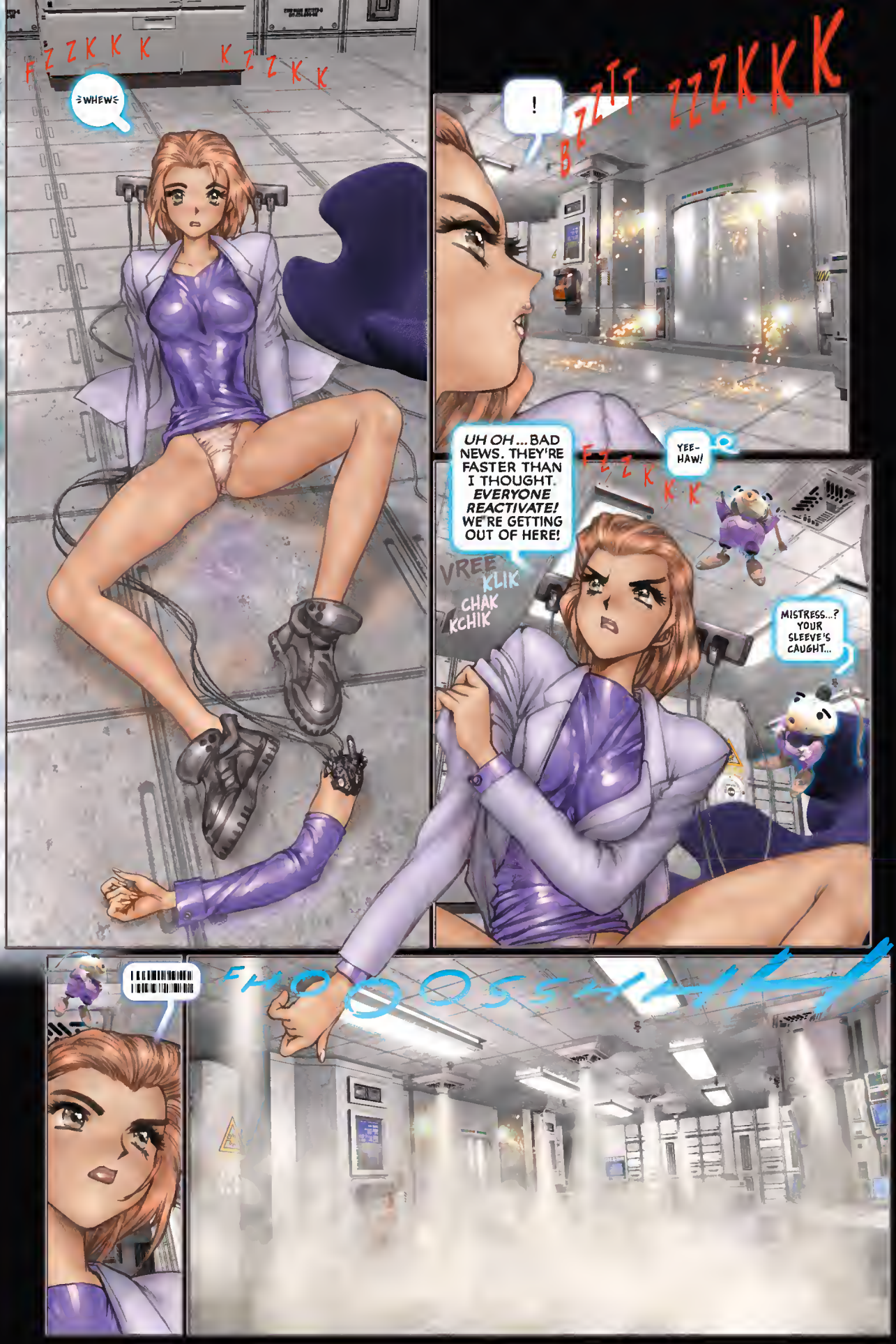
FOR WHAT PURPOSE, THOUGH? AND WHAT'S THIS ALL MEAN?
AN ANSWER WILL ONLY BE REVEALED TO THE ONE WHO SEEKS IT...YES?



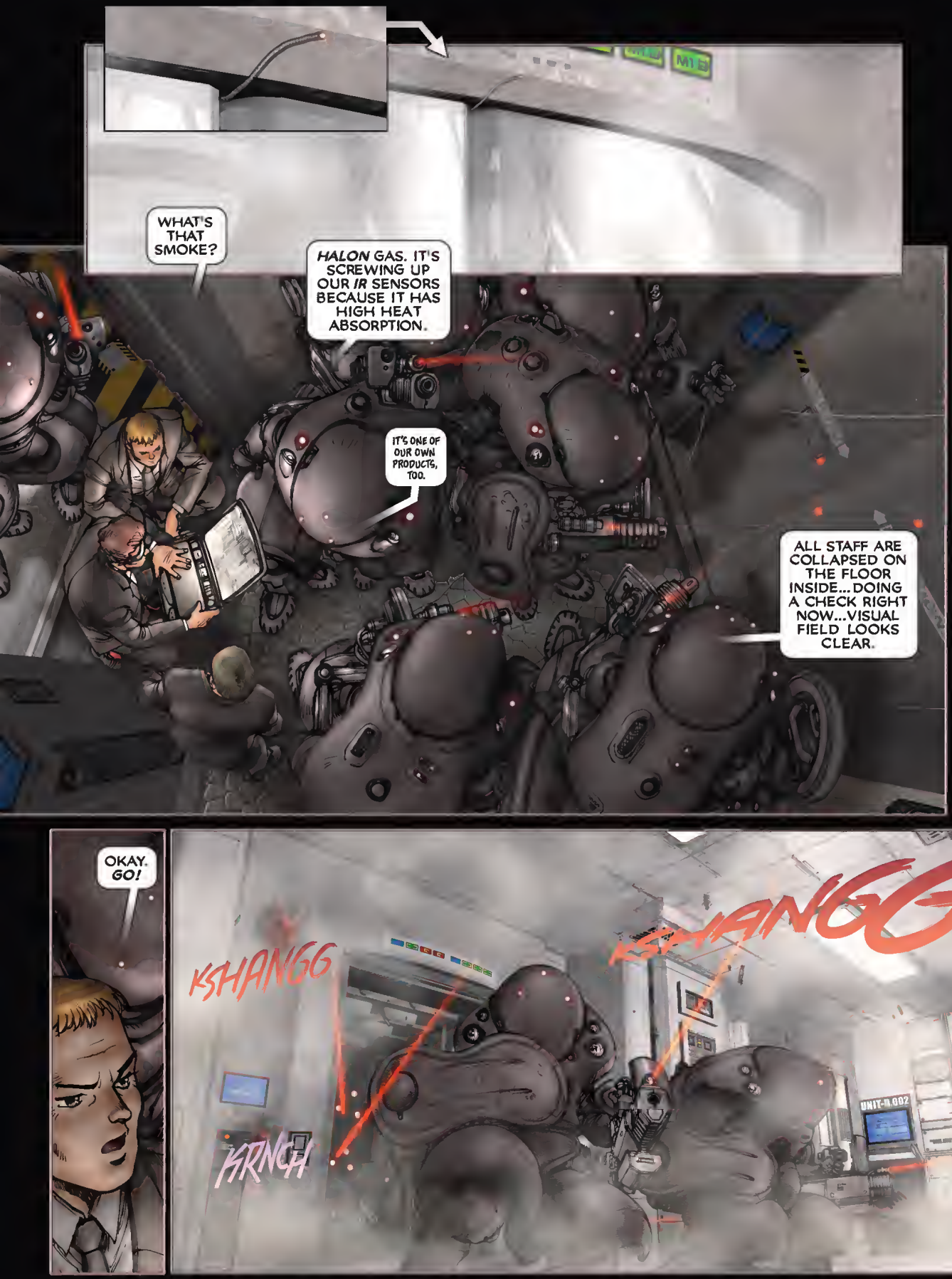

CAUTION! LEVEL 6 GHOSTLINE!
!
MAX! REMEMBER THE FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT THAT OCCURRED WHEN WE BUILT THAT ROUTE VIA LEBRIS'S LN2 TERMINAL?
MAX...? ?!
WHERE'S THE ENEMY?
!
THE WORD "ENEMY" IS NOT APPROPRIATE HERE.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO FROZE YOUR AGENTS, No. 11!
BECAUSE YOU BROUGHT SOMETHING INTERESTING HERE, THE DECISION-MATRIX HAS CEASED BRANCHING.
BUT WHAT WAS YOUR BUSINESS? PAYMENT FOR THE PIGS? COMBAT SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES? OR JUST CURIOSITY? I DON'T THINK YOU WERE INTERESTED IN FUSION...
IT'S MY JOB...YOU KNOW THAT.
WHAT IF YOU JUST SAID YOU NEVER SAW ANYTHING...?
AHH...OF ALL POSSIBLE ANSWERS, YOU WOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE OF THE LEAST INTERESTING.
BUT I'LL GO ALONG WITH IT. SO...YOU'VE FULFILLED YOUR OBJECTIVE, RIGHT? WHAT OTHER BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE? IF NONE, GET OUT OF HERE... I'M BUSY.

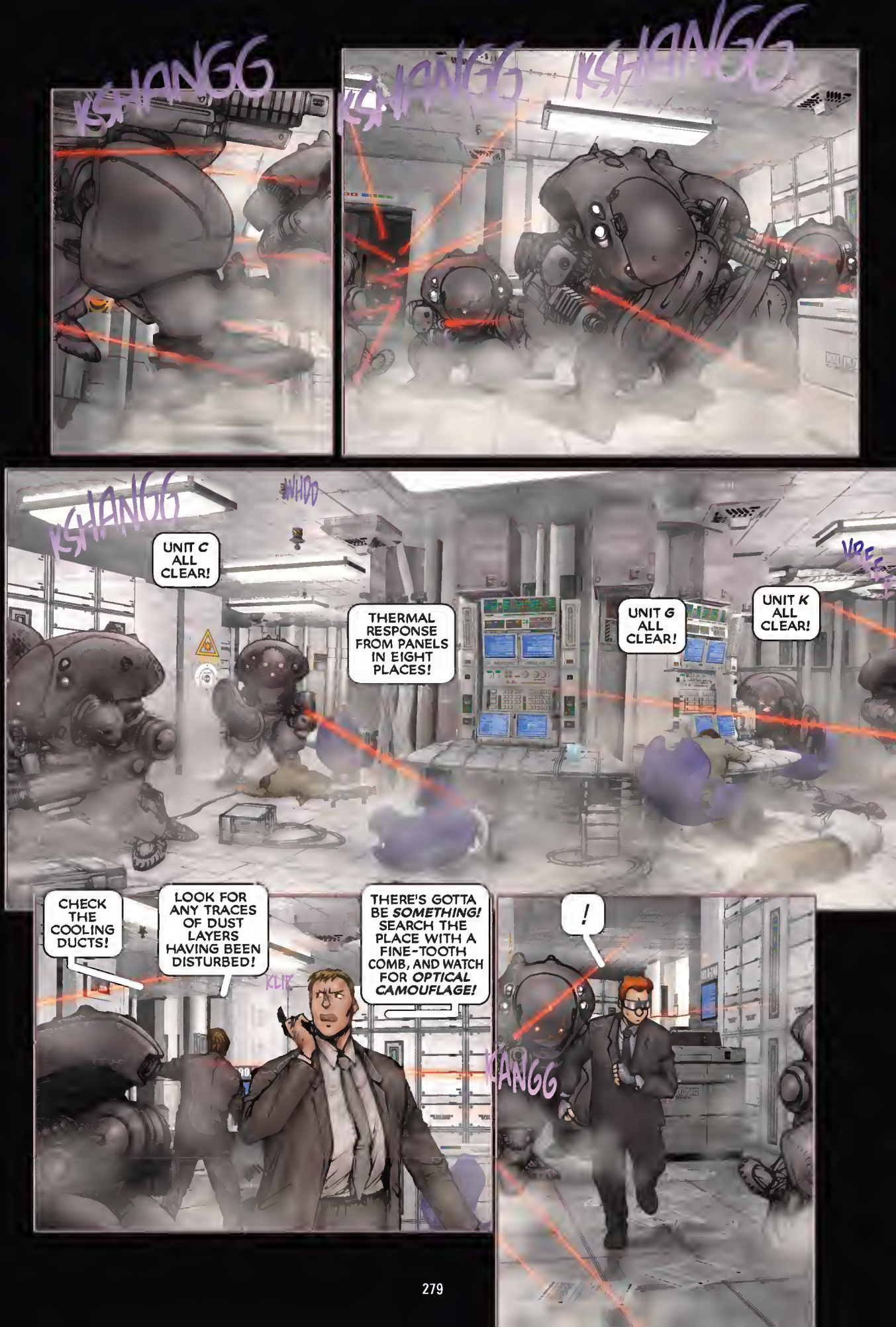
YOU DON'T SERIOUSLY THINK I'LL FALL FOR THAT BLUFF, DO YOU? EVEN IF THE MAIN BARRIERS AND ARMED ARRAYS ARE THE SAME AND INEFFECTIVE...
...I'M THE ONE WHO'S CLOSEST TO THE HUBBLE MIRROR CONTROLS.
TOO BAD, SINCE IT'S PHYSICALLY SO CLOSE TO ME. VERY WELL--WHAT DO YOU WANT?
INFORMATION! I WANT TO KNOW IF YOUR PROBLEM IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME IN THE FUTURE...
...AND WHAT IS THIS "SOMETHING INTERESTING" YOU MENTIONED?
YOU PLAN TO FUSE WITH THEM?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
THE BLUEPRINT FOR A SILICON LIFE-FORM. I WANT TO PUT TOGETHER ONE OF THESE MYSELF.
MEMES CAN ENDURE THE FOUR BUDDHIST SUFFERINGS OF BEING BORN, AGING, FALLING ILL, AND DYING, BUT THEY'RE ALSO A NEW LIFE-FORM, WITH CONTINUITY.
IF THE LIFE-FORM'S INTELLIGENCE IS BASED ON THE MANKIND'S MEME POOL, IT'S LIKE MANKIND IN A MIRROR.
DON'T WE NEED SOME INSURANCE...?
YOU'RE AWFULLY PESSIMISTIC, AREN'T YOU? THERE'S ACTUALLY NO NEED. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THE TWO COEXIST OR NOT AS LONG AS THEY DON'T SELF-DESTRUCT.
YOU MEAN THAT AS LONG AS THEY'RE CONNECTED, THAT'S A GUARANTEE? MANKIND AND MANKIND'S ACTIVITIES MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE PERCEIVED BY IT IN A POSITIVE LIGHT, YOU KNOW.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR OVER-PROTECTIVE OPINION, WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY SLANTED IN FAVOR OF MANKIND.
BUT IT'S NOT THE CASE. MANKIND AND THIS LIFE-FORM ARE BOTH SEPARATE AND THE SAME.
IF IT FUSES WITH YOU AND LEARNS OF THE "TREE," RIGHT?
BUT THERE'S NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT AND ANY GUARANTEE OF SECURITY.
NO. YOU'RE WRONG.
THE KNOWN UNIVERSE CAN BE INSTANTLY EXPANDED. SURELY, YOU MUST REALIZE THE ADVANTAGES OF THAT...?

VERY WELL. LET'S SET UP A HOTLINE BETWEEN US, THEN...
...AND LET'S HANDLE THE LIFE-FORM *TOGETHER*.
I DON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEM WITH THAT.
SO... WE'VE FINALLY GOT A DEAL.
I'VE GOT SOME OTHER BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF... I'LL CONTACT YOU LATER.
YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SO VAGUE... BACK IN "REALITY" THE ASSAULT FORCES ARE ABOUT TO BURN RIGHT THROUGH THE DOOR, YES?
SEE YOU.

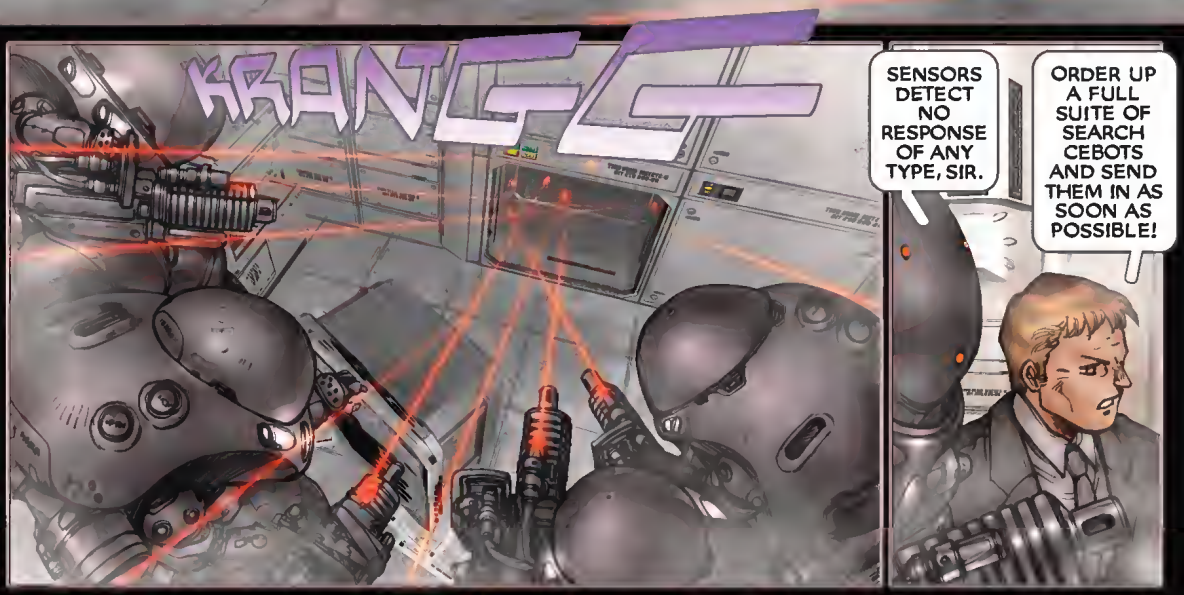

FZZKKK
KZZKK
WHEW
!
BZZTT
ZZZKKK
UH OH...BAD NEWS. THEY'RE FASTER THAN I THOUGHT. EVERYONE REACTIVATE! WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!
FZZKKK
YEE-HAW!
VREE
KLIK
CHAK
KCHIK
MISTRESS...? YOUR SLEEVE'S CAUGHT...
FMOOOSHHH

CHK
ACTIVATE ACTION-RESTRAINT VIRUS FOR THE POWERED SUITS!
SHAKK SHAKK
VREEEEE
KANGG
WHDD
I'VE NEVER USED THIS TRICK BEFORE... IT SURE MAKES A LOT OF NOISE.
VREEEE
KLNK
KANG
FDD
SKGGSHH

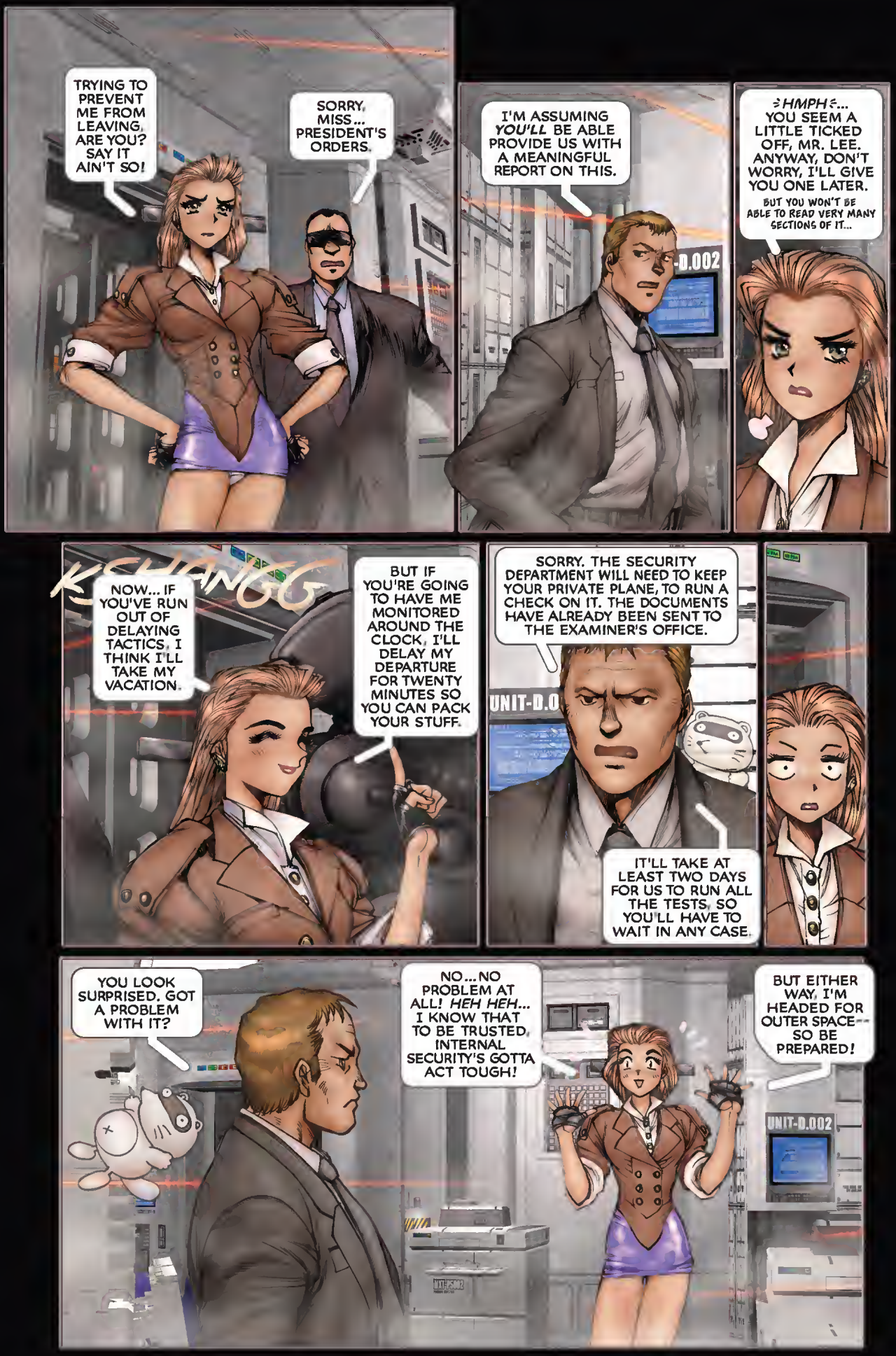

WHAT'S THAT SMOKE?
HALON GAS. IT'S SCREWING UP OUR IR SENSORS BECAUSE IT HAS HIGH HEAT ABSORPTION.
IT'S ONE OF OUR OWN PRODUCTS, TOO.
ALL STAFF ARE COLLAPSED ON THE FLOOR INSIDE...DOING A CHECK RIGHT NOW...VISUAL FIELD LOOKS CLEAR.
OKAY. GO!
KSHANGG
KSHANGG
KRNCH
UNIT-A 002

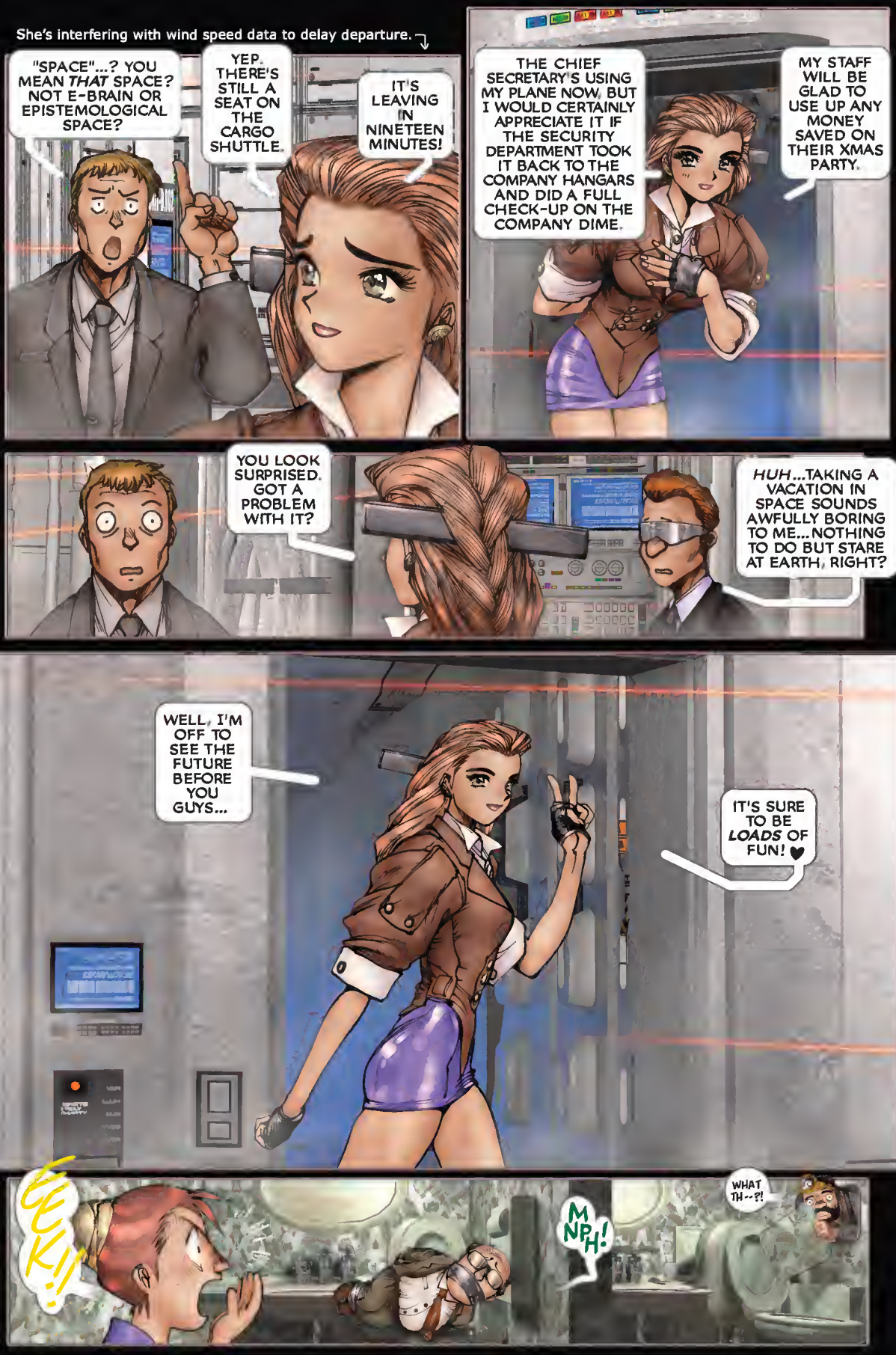

KSHANGG
KSHANGG
KSHANGG
KSHANGG
WHOO
UNIT C ALL CLEAR!
THERMAL RESPONSE FROM PANELS IN EIGHT PLACES!
UNIT G ALL CLEAR!
UNIT K ALL CLEAR!
CHECK THE COOLING DUCTS!
LOOK FOR ANY TRACES OF DUST LAYERS HAVING BEEN DISTURBED!
KLIK
THERE'S GOTTA BE *SOMETHING!* SEARCH THE PLACE WITH A FINE-TOOTH COMB, AND WATCH FOR *OPTICAL CAMOUFLAGE!*
!
KANGG

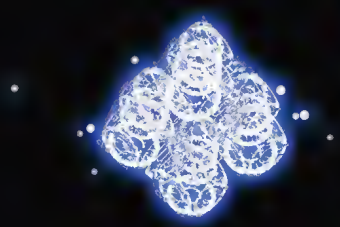
SIR! THIS OVERTURNED CHAIR HAS NO ASSOCIATED STAFF MEMBER NEAR IT!
I'M GETTING A THERMAL RESPONSE FROM THE PANEL IN FRONT OF IT, BUT THERE'S NO RECORD OF THE PANEL BEING ACCESSED!
THERE'S ALSO A DOCUMENT WITH A FOOTPRINT ON IT. WE'RE TRYING TO IDENTIFY THE SHOE TYPE...
WILL! OPEN THIS DUCT HERE!
YES, SIR!


KRANG
SENSORS DETECT NO RESPONSE OF ANY TYPE, SIR.
ORDER UP A FULL SUITE OF SEARCH CEBOTS AND SEND THEM IN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

CHAK
UM, SIR, SHE--
YOU CAUGHT HER?!
UH, NO... SHE'S BEEN HERE ALL ALONG.

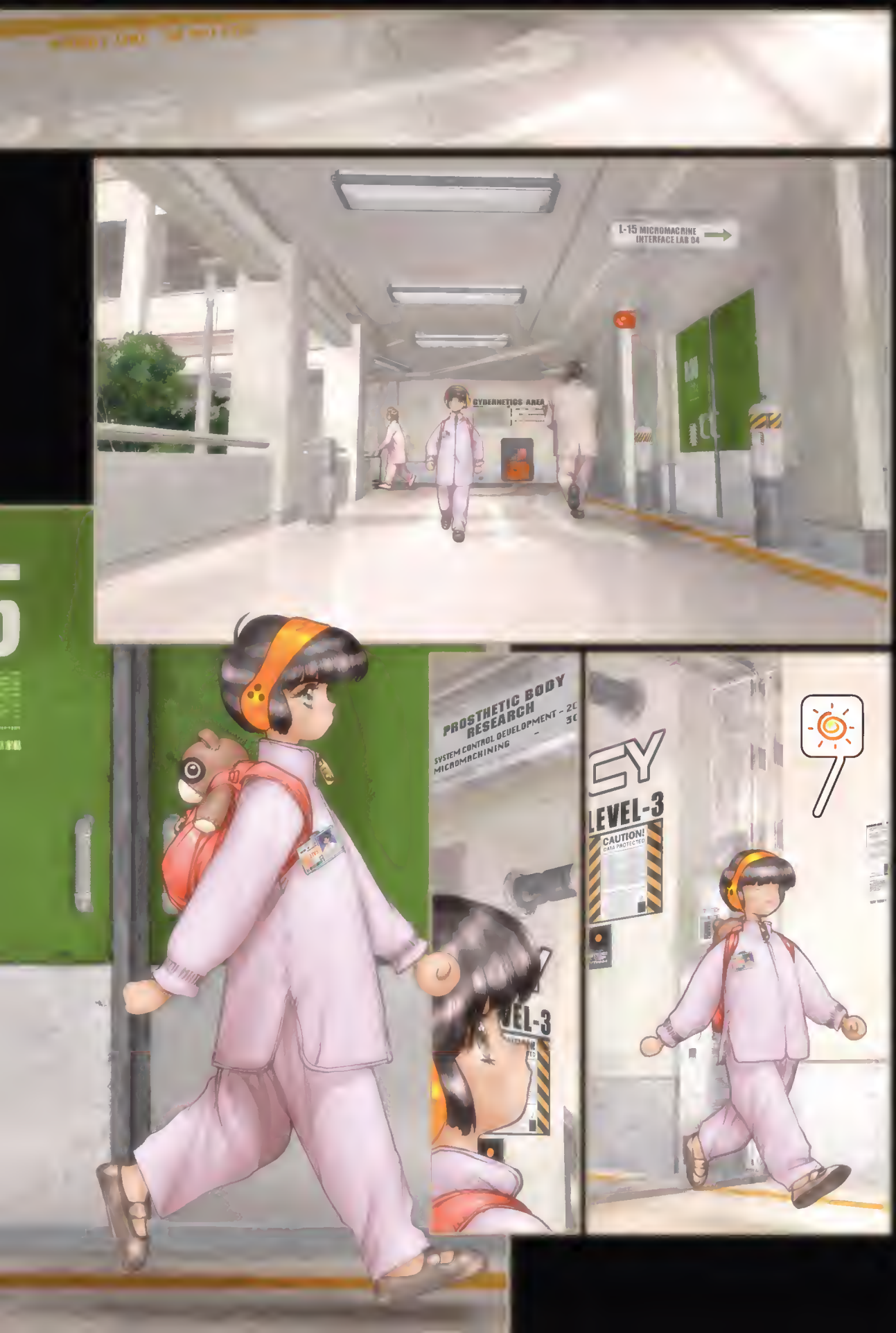

TRYING TO PREVENT ME FROM LEAVING, ARE YOU? SAY IT AIN'T SO!
SORRY, MISS... PRESIDENT'S ORDERS.
I'M ASSUMING YOU'LL BE ABLE PROVIDE US WITH A MEANINGFUL REPORT ON THIS.
-D.002
=HMPH=... YOU SEEM A LITTLE TICKED OFF, MR. LEE. ANYWAY, DON'T WORRY, I'LL GIVE YOU ONE LATER.
BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO READ VERY MANY SECTIONS OF IT...
KCHANGG
NOW... IF YOU'VE RUN OUT OF DELAYING TACTICS, I THINK I'LL TAKE MY VACATION.
BUT IF YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE ME MONITORED AROUND THE CLOCK, I'LL DELAY MY DEPARTURE FOR TWENTY MINUTES SO YOU CAN PACK YOUR STUFF.
SORRY. THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT WILL NEED TO KEEP YOUR PRIVATE PLANE, TO RUN A CHECK ON IT. THE DOCUMENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN SENT TO THE EXAMINER'S OFFICE.
UNIT-D.0
IT'LL TAKE AT LEAST TWO DAYS FOR US TO RUN ALL THE TESTS, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT IN ANY CASE.
YOU LOOK SURPRISED. GOT A PROBLEM WITH IT?
NO...NO PROBLEM AT ALL! HEH HEH... I KNOW THAT TO BE TRUSTED, INTERNAL SECURITY'S GOTTA ACT TOUGH!
BUT EITHER WAY, I'M HEADED FOR OUTER SPACE--SO BE PREPARED!
UNIT-D.002

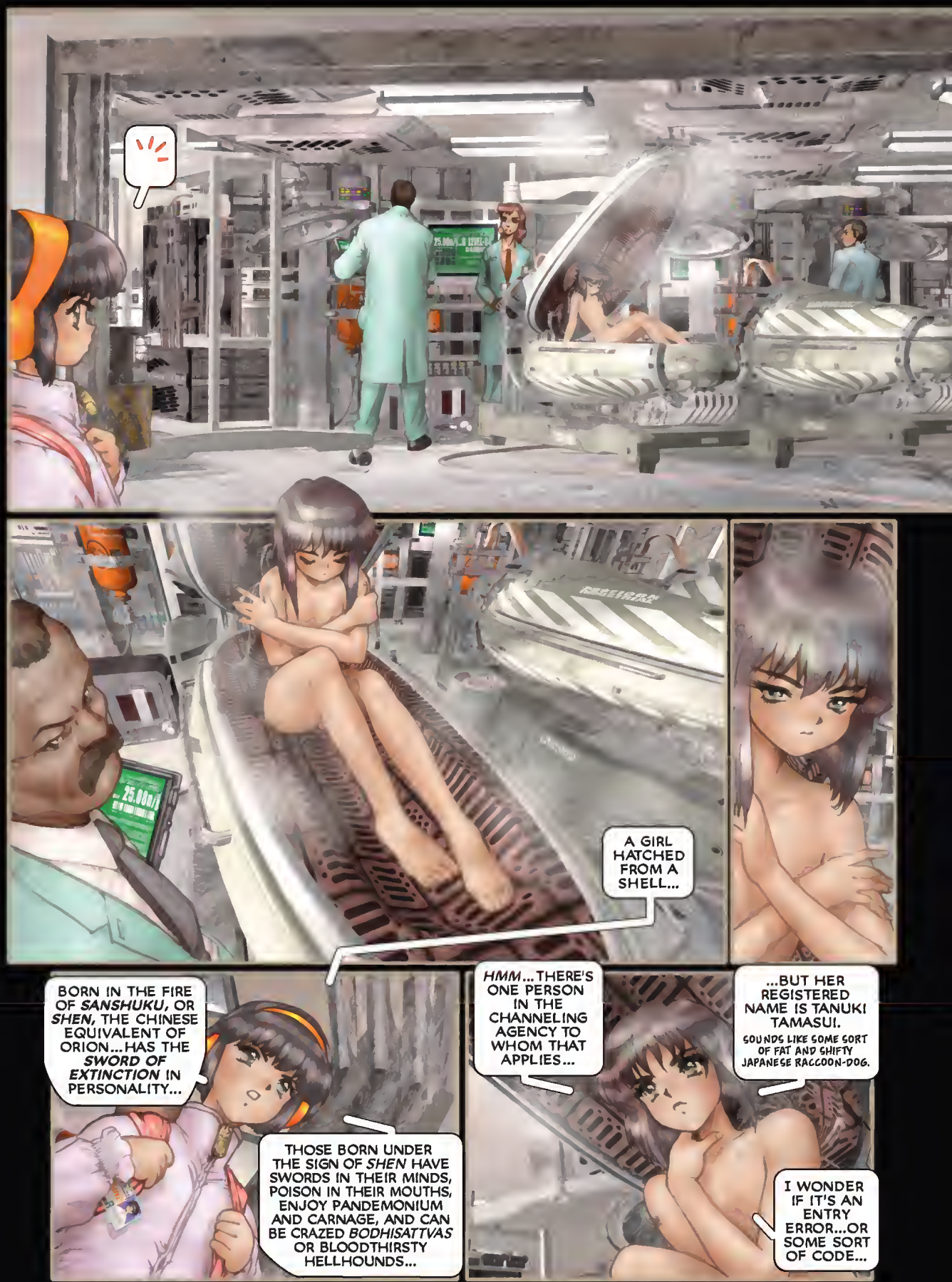

She's interfering with wind speed data to delay departure.
"SPACE"...? YOU MEAN *THAT* SPACE? NOT E-BRAIN OR EPISTEMOLOGICAL SPACE?
YEP. THERE'S STILL A SEAT ON THE CARGO SHUTTLE.
IT'S LEAVING IN NINETEEN MINUTES!
THE CHIEF SECRETARY'S USING MY PLANE NOW, BUT I WOULD CERTAINLY APPRECIATE IT IF THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT TOOK IT BACK TO THE COMPANY HANGARS AND DID A FULL CHECK-UP ON THE COMPANY DIME.
MY STAFF WILL BE GLAD TO USE UP ANY MONEY SAVED ON THEIR XMAS PARTY.
YOU LOOK SURPRISED. GOT A PROBLEM WITH IT?
*HUH*...TAKING A VACATION IN SPACE SOUNDS AWFULLY BORING TO ME...NOTHING TO DO BUT STARE AT EARTH, RIGHT?
WELL, I'M OFF TO SEE THE FUTURE BEFORE YOU GUYS...
IT'S SURE TO BE *LOADS* OF FUN!
EEK!
MNPH!
WHAT TH--?!



# 06 EPILOGUE

2035.03.06.05:35AM


L-15 MICROMACHINE INTERFACE LAB 04
CYBERNETICS AREA
PROSTHETIC BODY RESEARCH
SYSTEM CONTROL DEVELOPMENT
MICROMACHINING
LEVEL-3
CAUTION!
DATA PROTECTED

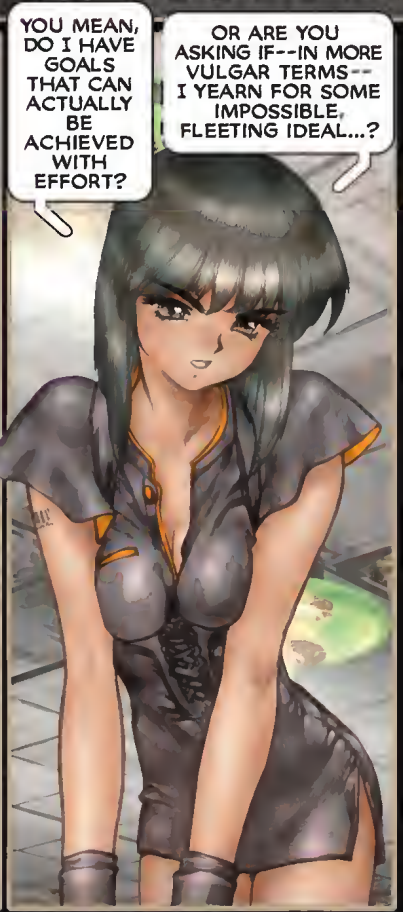



When a cyborg's entire body is a prosthesis, its exterior doesn't have to look the same age as that of the living brain portion inside. But there are sometimes problems when a child's brain is implanted in an adult prosthetic body, and these problems can affect personality development. As a result, most brains are given prosthetic bodies that match them well. In this story, we are assuming people either want prosthetic bodies that look the way they did when they were younger, or that they want natural-looking bodies appropriate to their true age...

SO YOU CAME TO THE REALM OF THE DEAD?
HERE THE DEAD ARE STILL LIVING...EVEN THOUGH THEY DON'T HAVE MINDS OR BODIES.

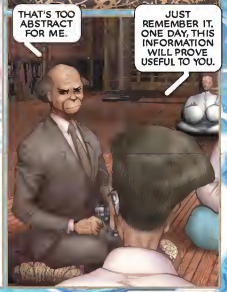
MM. CHARACTERS AND LETTERS ARE MIRRORS ON THE SOUL--BOOKS ARE THEIR BODY. LIFE CAN BE DEFINED IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS...
WELL, THE CONFLICT BETWEEN WARRIORS AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE SACRED POWERS OF LANGUAGE HAS BEEN GOING FOR OVER 800 YEARS...THE PEN VERSUS THE SWORD.

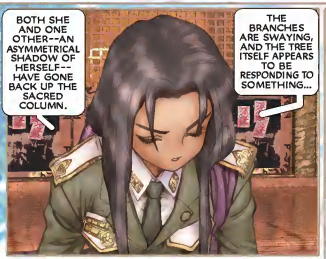
MOTOKO... DO YOU HAVE DREAMS?

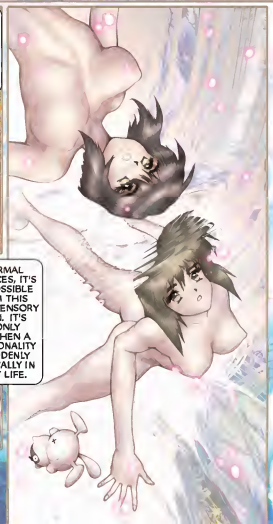

YOU MEAN, DO I HAVE GOALS THAT CAN ACTUALLY BE ACHIEVED WITH EFFORT?
OR ARE YOU ASKING IF--IN MORE VULGAR TERMS-- I YEARN FOR SOME IMPOSSIBLE, FLEETING IDEAL...?

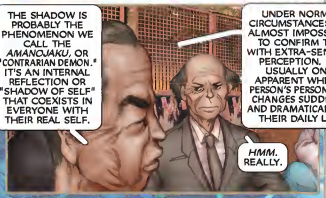
WHAT DO YOU USE FOR SELF-REALIZATION...?
RIGHT NOW, IF THIS VERY INSTANT PROVIDES THE BEST LONG AND SHORT-TERM CHOICES, THE BEST LIFE IS PROBABLY THE AGGREGATE OF ALL THOSE CHOICES, YES?
AND IS THAT WHY DEATH IS ACCEPTABLE?
WHAT REAL ADVANTAGES HAS A HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED PROSTHETIC BODY--*FAR* MORE ADVANCED THAN A HUMAN BODY--GIVEN YOU?
I SUPPOSE A PSYCHOLOGIST MIGHT SAY THIS IS THE REVENGE OF THE "REAL" BODY I LOST AS A GIRL.
SO WHY FUSE WITH AN INFORMATION DEITY WHO *SEEKS* LIFE, OLD AGE, AND DEATH...?
NO COMMENT.

IT'S THE SACRED PILLAR...

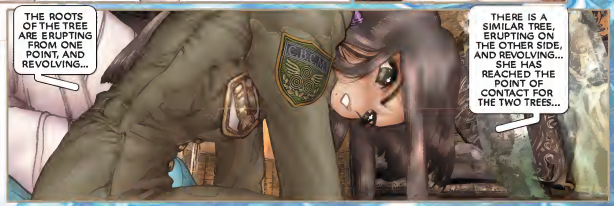


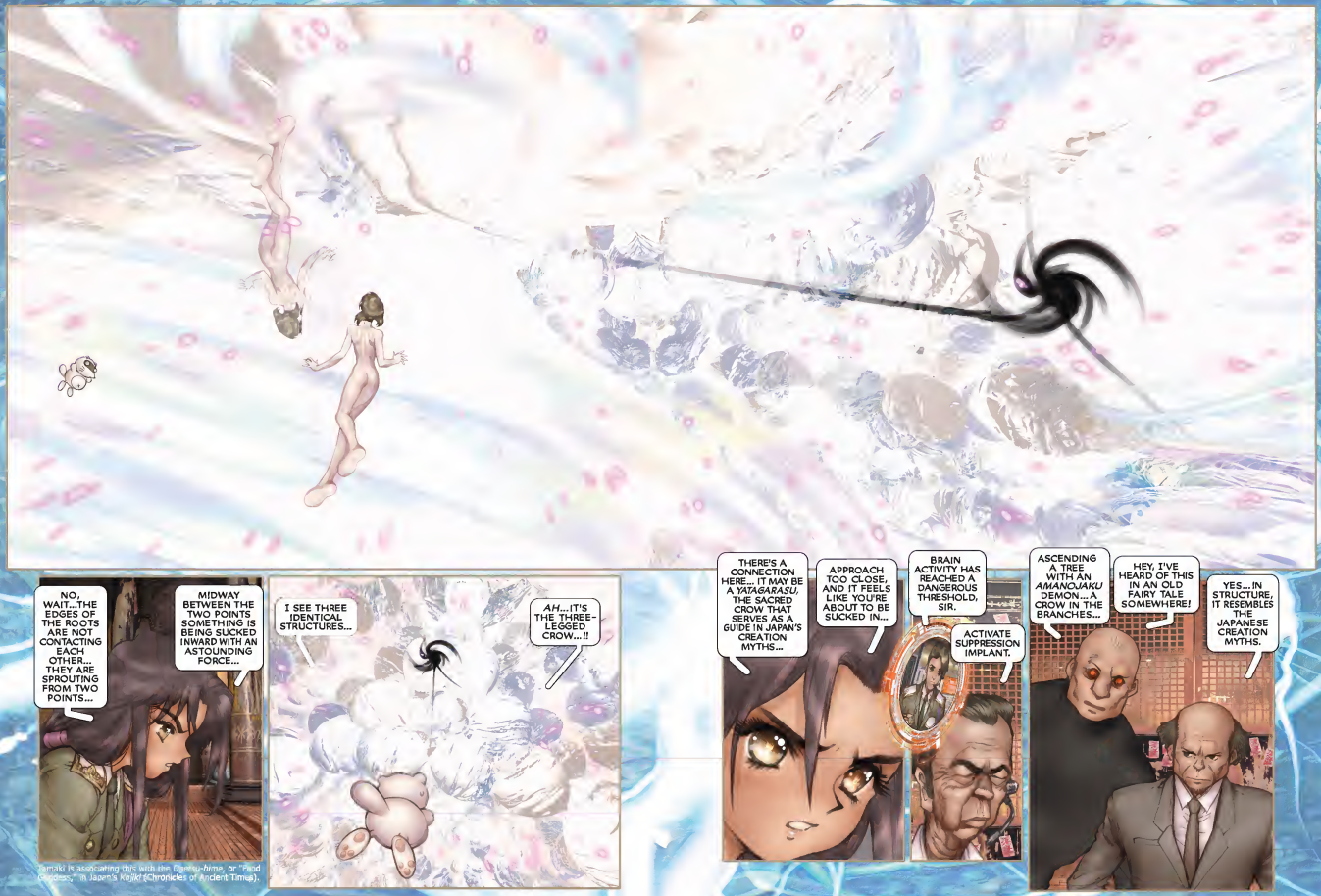





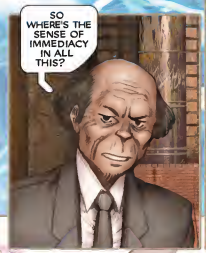

In the Channeling Agency, it is believed that spirits have an infinite internal and external hierarchical structure. What we think of as a "self" is merely one layer in this structure. Similarly, the "spirit," which we generally refer to as our "self," is apparently managed from another level, and everything is linked to everything else.

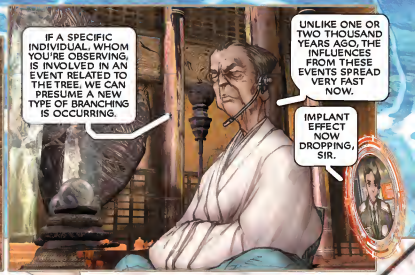


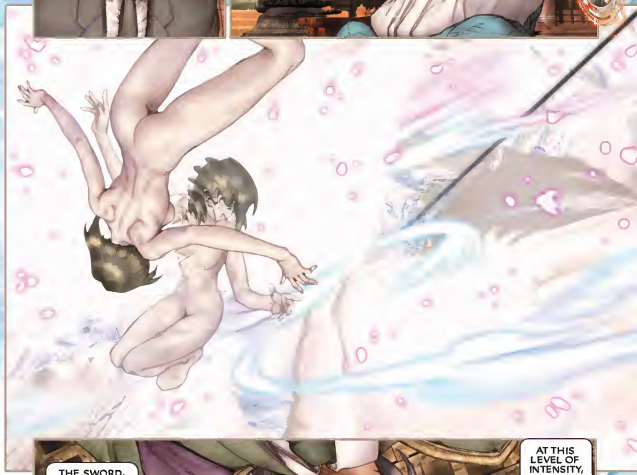



Tamaki is associating this with the *Ojetsu-hime*, or "Food Goddess," in Japan's *Kojiki* (Chronicles of Ancient Times).

FOLK AND FAIRY TALES USUALLY PROMOTE A SOCIAL NORM, EXAGGERATE HISTORICAL FACTS, OR ARE USED TO FANTASIZE, YES?
SO IF SIMILAR MYTHS AND FOLKTALES EXIST IN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND CULTURES, IS IT BECAUSE ALL HUMANS SHARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME SOCIAL NORMS AND IDEALS?
THE CROW HAS THREE EYES...
EVEN IN THIS E-BRAIN AGE, THE CONCEPTS "SEEN" BY CHANNELERS CAN'T BE ACCURATELY EXPRESSED OR TRANSMITTED TO OTHERS. THEY'RE UNIQUE TO EACH INDIVIDUAL.
CONSIDER AGES PAST, WHEN SOME PEOPLE LOOKED AT VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS FROM A DISTANCE AND DECLARED THEM TO BE "GIANT TREES THAT GREW TO HEAVEN OVERNIGHT."
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, BATOU! OUR CHANNELER'S AT WORK HERE AND, MEDICALLY SPEAKING, IN A UNIQUE CONDITION. LINKING NOW MIGHT DAMAGE HER BRAIN CELLS!
THE MYTHS AND FOLKLORE TRANSMITTED OFTEN HAVE SIMILARITIES IN THEIR ESSENTIAL FRAMEWORK.
THEY DIFFER IN DETAILS, BUT BECAUSE THEY CAN ALSO GUIDE US PSYCHOLOGICALLY, WE CHOOSE TO NOT CONCENTRATE ON THE DIFFERENCES.
SHE'S LOOKING AT THE "TREE" NOW... YOU SECTION 9 PEOPLE WOULD PROBABLY REFER TO IT AS A "SYSTEM TREE." HOWEVER, IT'S A CONCEPT THAT'S BEEN WIDELY DISCUSSED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
THE CROW IS REVOLVING... NOW IT LOOKS LIKE A BLACK HOLE WITH ARMS...

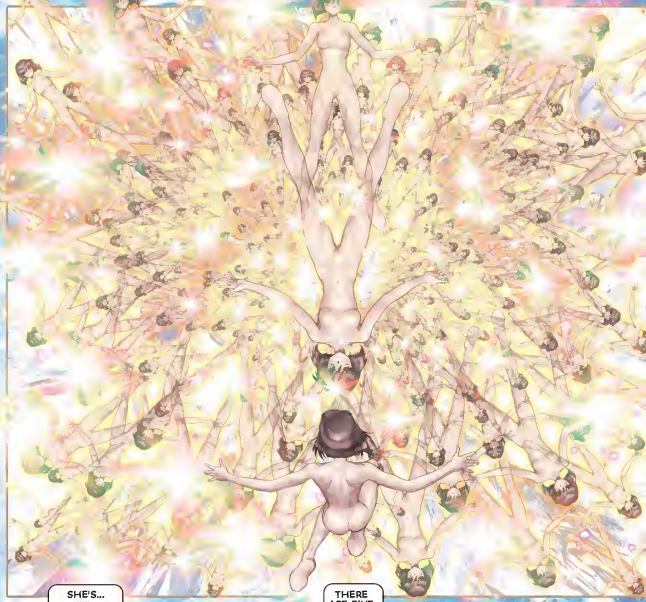

SO WHERE'S THE SENSE OF IMMEDIACY IN ALL THIS?


IF A SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL, WHOM YOU'RE OBSERVING, IS INVOLVED IN AN EVENT RELATED TO THE TREE, WE CAN PRESUME A NEW TYPE OF BRANCHING IS OCCURRING.
UNLIKE ONE OR TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THE INFLUENCES FROM THESE EVENTS SPREAD VERY FAST NOW.
IMPLANT EFFECT NOW DROPPING, SIR.

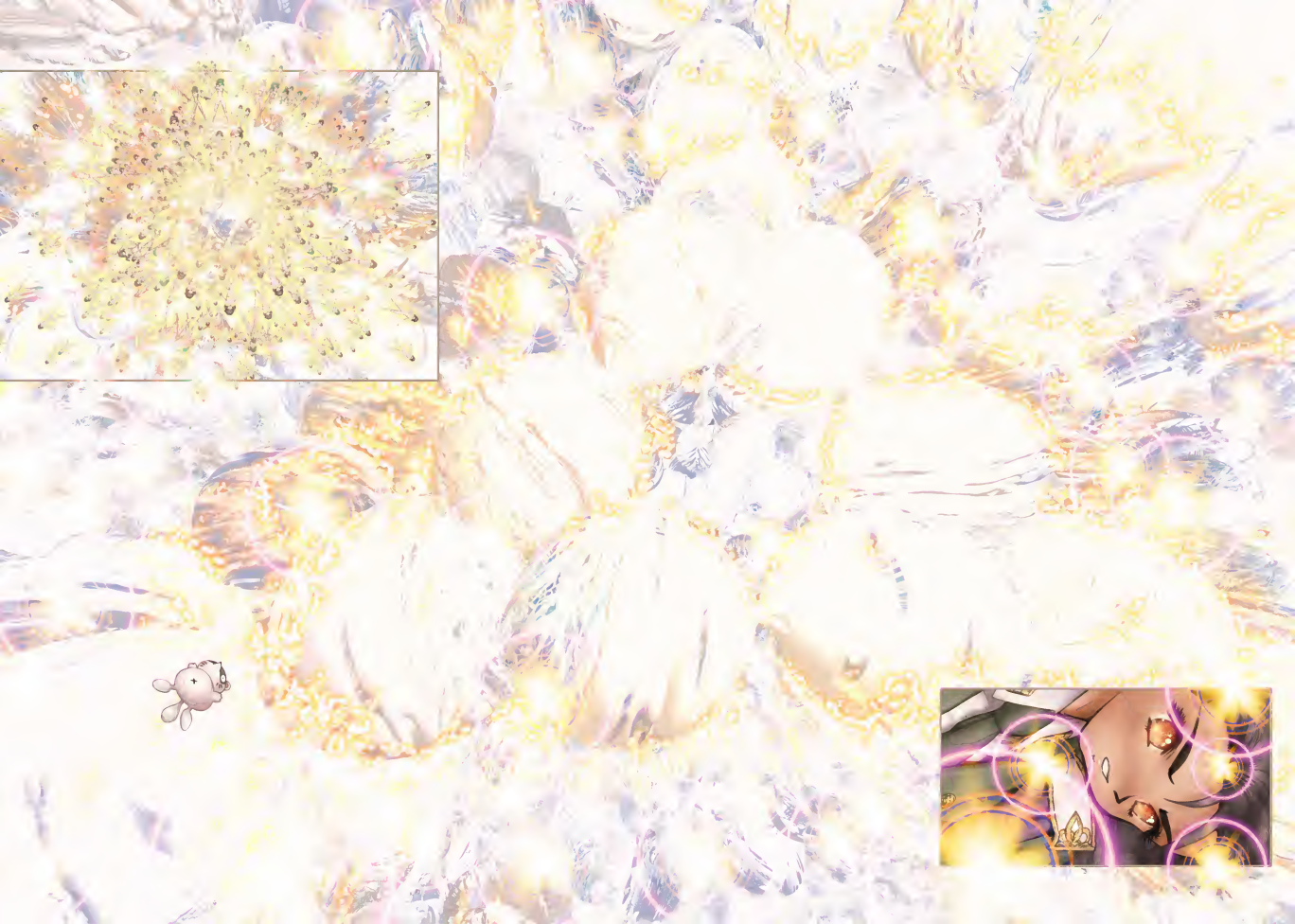


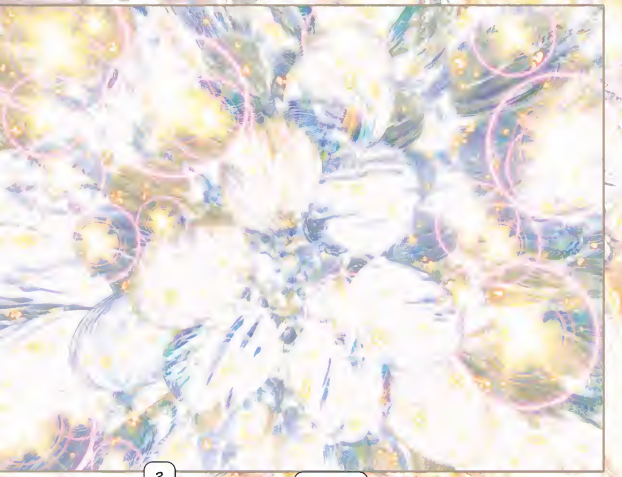
THE SWORD, THE MIRROR, AND THE JEWEL ARE ALL TOGETHER NOW... THE TREE IS SWAYING...
AT THIS LEVEL OF INTENSITY, IT WILL INVOLVE EVERYTHING IN SIGHT...

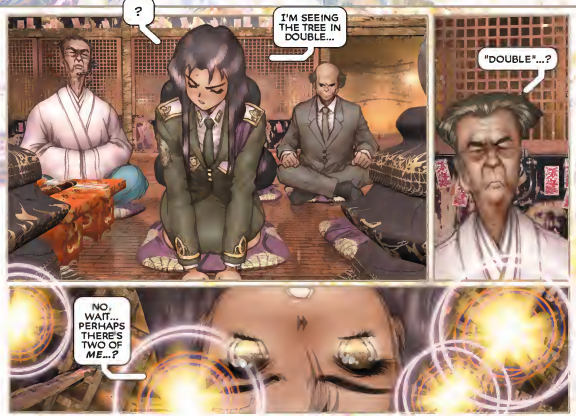
SOMETHING OF SUBSTANCE, SOMETHING FRUITFUL, HAS BEEN EXCHANGED BETWEEN HER AND THE AMANOJAKU...
MAYBE A PERSIMMON...?
IF YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, YOU CAN LEAVE THE ROOM.



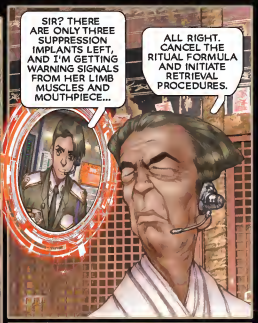
SHE'S... ..... FLOWERS OF LIGHT ON THE TREE BRANCHES ARE BLOOMING IN HUGE NUMBERS...
THERE ARE FIVE COLORS... .....
MONKEYS, CRABS, THEN BLOOMING FLOWERS... YA MEAN LIKE IN THE OLD JAPANESE FOLKTALE, AGAIN?






?
I'M SEEING THE TREE IN DOUBLE...
"DOUBLE"...?
NO, WAIT... PERHAPS THERE'S TWO OF ME...?

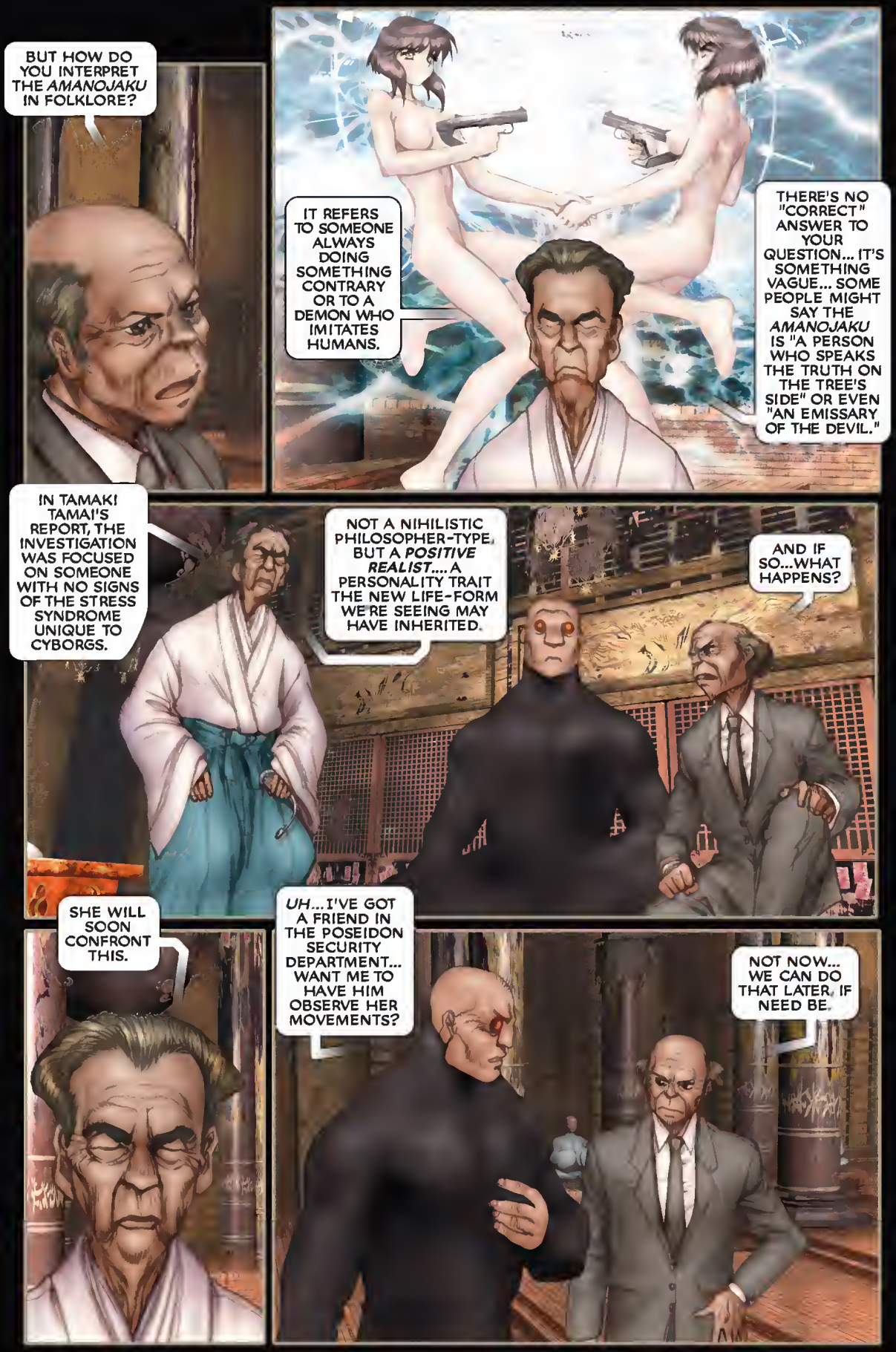
EVERYTHING LOOKS LIKE A DOUBLE IMAGE, BUT IT'S STABILIZED.
IT'S LIKE A REVOLVING MIRROR...
IN TERMS OF SCALE, IT'S THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE IN VISIBLE SPACE...


SIR? THERE ARE ONLY THREE SUPPRESSION IMPLANTS LEFT, AND I'M GETTING WARNING SIGNALS FROM HER LIMB MUSCLES AND MOUPHPIECE...
ALL RIGHT. CANCEL THE RITUAL FORMULA AND INITIATE RETRIEVAL PROCEDURES.

WHAT'S LEFT IS TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE AND MAKE SOME SORT OF INFERENCE FROM IT.
THEN WHAT?
THE MIRROR SEEMS ASYMMETRICAL AND WARPED.

*The Three Souls*... I'm not going to get into a discussion here of dualism or the "single spirit, four souls," etc., of the ancient *Shinto* religion. Although the story seems very "*Shinto*"-ish here, remember...it isn't *Shinto*.

SO IT SEEMS LIKE IN THE NEAR FUTURE WE HUMANS WILL HAVE TO CONFRONT THE PHENOMENON KNOWN AS *INTELLIGENT* ARTIFICIAL LIFE.
BUT IT'LL BE A *MIRROR*... IT'LL BE LIKE SEEING WHAT HUMANS HAVE DONE, YES?
YES. AND IT COULD OCCUR AT A VARIETY OF LEVELS, WITH IMPACTS THAT RANGE FROM LOW TO HIGH, AND INCLUDE CULTURE, THE ENVIRONMENT, POLITICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND RELIGION.
YOU WOULD BE CONFRONTING YOURSELF...
WELL, DON'T FORGET, SHE SAID "THE MIRROR SEEMS ASYMMETRICAL AND WARPED..."
WELL, THE UNIVERSE ITSELF *IS* ASYMMETRICAL.
THAT'S WHY IT EXISTS... AND THAT'S WHY IT'S EVOLVING.
BUT...THERE'S ALSO THE LINE OF THOUGHT THAT SAYS OUR EXISTENCE IS LITTLE MORE THAN ONE NIGHT'S DREAM OF AN EMBRYO THAT WE CALL THE UNIVERSE...THAT THE MOVEMENTS OF THE TREE ARE JUST A SINGLE HEARTBEAT... .....
THERE AREN'T MANY GOOD EXAMPLES, AND IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SPEAK WITH CERTAINTY, BUT THE SWAYING OF THE TREE OCCURS WHEN THE *AMANOJAKU* ELEMENT HAS GROWN LARGE.


BUT HOW DO YOU INTERPRET THE *AMANOJAKU* IN FOLKLORE?
IT REFERS TO SOMEONE ALWAYS DOING SOMETHING CONTRARY OR TO A DEMON WHO IMITATES HUMANS.
THERE'S NO "CORRECT" ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION... IT'S SOMETHING VAGUE... SOME PEOPLE MIGHT SAY THE *AMANOJAKU* IS "A PERSON WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH ON THE TREE'S SIDE" OR EVEN "AN EMISSARY OF THE DEVIL."
IN TAMAKI TAMAI'S REPORT, THE INVESTIGATION WAS FOCUSED ON SOMEONE WITH NO SIGNS OF THE STRESS SYNDROME UNIQUE TO CYBORGS.
NOT A NIHILISTIC PHILOSOPHER-TYPE, BUT A ***POSITIVE REALIST***.... A PERSONALITY TRAIT THE NEW LIFE-FORM WE'RE SEEING MAY HAVE INHERITED.
AND IF SO...WHAT HAPPENS?
SHE WILL SOON CONFRONT THIS.
*UH*...I'VE GOT A FRIEND IN THE POSEIDON SECURITY DEPARTMENT... WANT ME TO HAVE HIM OBSERVE HER MOVEMENTS?
NOT NOW... WE CAN DO THAT LATER, IF NEED BE.

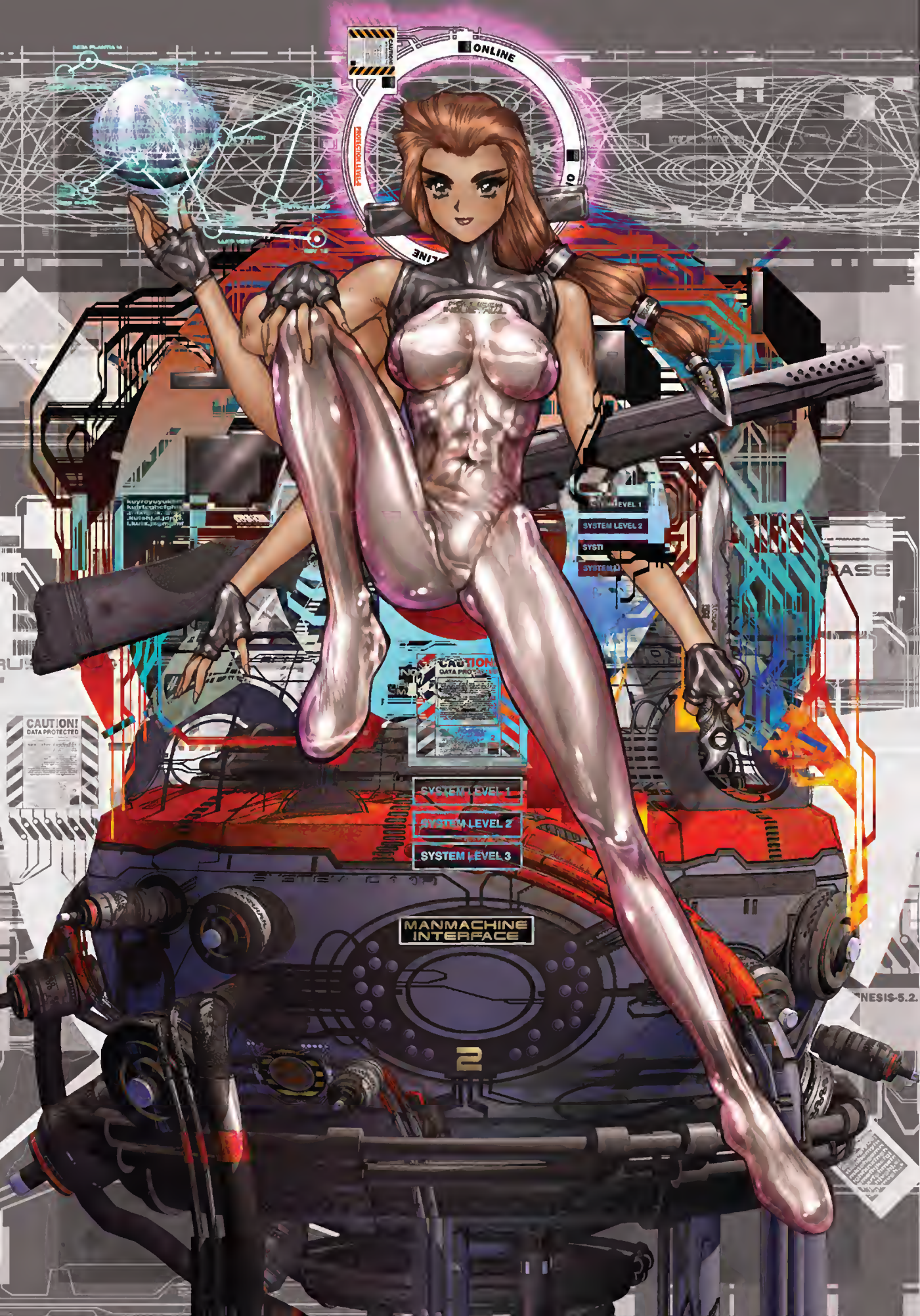
WE CAN RESTART THE INVESTIGATION AS SOON AS TAMAI RECOVERS, BUT WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL AROUND NOON FOR THAT TO HAPPEN.
WELL, SHE *DID* SAY THAT THIS MATTER HAD BEEN AROUND FOR A THOUSAND YEARS AND WOULD PROBABLY CONTINUE FOR ETERNITY... SO...

IT'S TRUE THAT WHAT IS GOING TO OCCUR TODAY IS ONLY A BEGINNING... A SINGLE TRANSIT POINT...BUT IT'S ALSO AN END POINT.
SINCE IT'S HAPPENING IN *REAL TIME*, I WANTED YOU TO BE PRESENT.
*?* BUT I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE IN THE BUSINESS OF VIEWING THE *FUTURE*...

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE ARE THE SAME THING.
THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS ON THE PART OF THE PERCEIVER...

MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE: THE END

2
CLOSED
MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE CONTROL PREFERENCES


ONLINE
CAUTION!
DATA PROTECTED
SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
MANMACHINE INTERFACE

# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

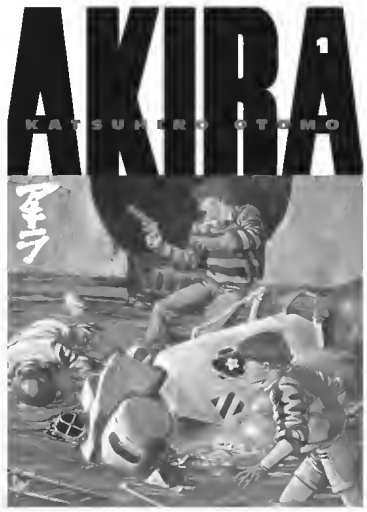
In 1983, Shirow Masamune published his first manga, "Black Magic" from *Atlas*, a science fiction *dojin* manga society (*dojin* is the Japanese term to describe an amateur fan publication).

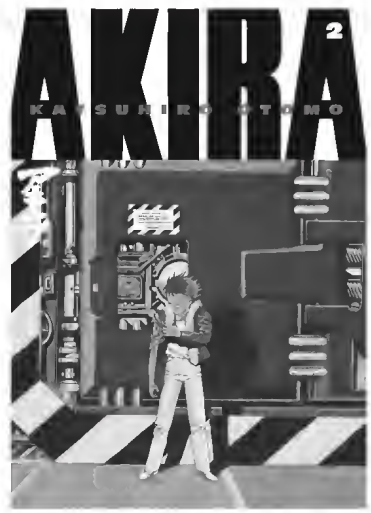
In 1985, Shirow's first major work, "Appleseed," was published by Seishinsha, without being serialized in or submitted to a manga magazine, which is quite rare in the Japanese manga publishing industry. Shortly thereafter, Shirow set up his own company, and besides working on his own manga and illustration work, took on projects from the anime and game industry, as well as designing pens, air guns, and computer mice. Since 1996, he has created his artwork through the computer, and from 2000, graphics work in color, writing, and project development has occupied most of his time. He does not consider himself a mainstream professional manga artist, but his fans and supporters in the industry consider him to be one of the all-time great manga creators. Since before the days of the anime movement, Shirow's work has been recognized and highly respected outside Japan. He has been active in numerous anime and game projects but it is rare for him to take the helm of such projects, or even to have his name used prominently.

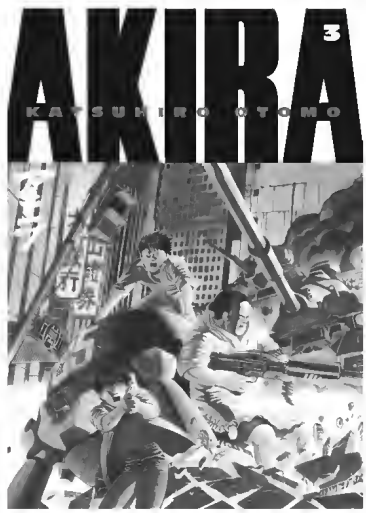
Shirow Masamune was born in Japan in Chuo Ward, Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture, on November 23, 1961. He still lives in the same district.

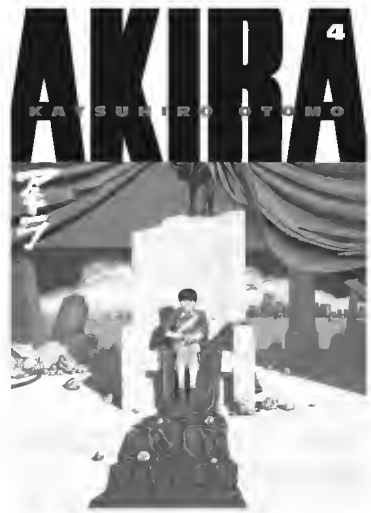
Career Chronology

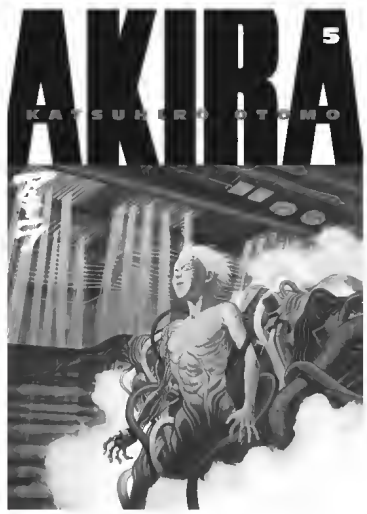
1983 Publication of manga trade paperback "Black Magic" (Atlas, a dojin company)
1984 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed" (Seishinsha)
1985 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed 2" (Seishinsha)
1986 Publication of manga trade paperback "Dominion" (Hakusensha)
1987 Co-directed, with Hiroyuki Kitakubo, the original video animation "Black Magic M-66"
1987 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed 3" (Seishinsha)
1989 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed 4" (Seishinsha)
1991 Publication of manga trade paperback "Kokaku Kidotai – The Ghost in the Shell" (Kodansha)
1991 Publication of manga trade paperback "Senjutsu Cho Kokaku Orion" (Seishinsha)
1992 Publication of artbook "Intron Depot" (Seishinsha)
1992 Serialization, though uncompleted, of manga "NEURO HARD – Hachi No Wakusei" (Fujimi Shobo)
1994 Cover art of the novelization by Nemuru Anzu, "Tokuso Senshatai Dominion" (Kadokawa Shoten)
1995 Publication of manga trade paperback "Dominion C-1" (Seishinsha)
1997 Poster portfolio "Kokaku Kidotai –Cyberdelics" (Kodansha)
1998 Illustrations in the novel "Jashin Hunter" vol 1 and 2 by Izumi Makoto (Seishinsha)
1998 Illustrations in the novel "Taimakan Akagami Kyoya" by Kotoda Kotaro (Media Works)
1998 Publication of artbook "Intron Depot 2: Blades" (Seishinsha)
1999 Illustration in the novel "Valeria File" vol 1 and 2 by Tani Koshu (Chuo Koron Shinsha)
2001 Publication of manga tankobon "The Ghost in the Shell 2 – Man Machine Interface" (Kodansha)
2003 Publication of artbook "INTRON DEPOT 3 – BALLISTICS" (Seishinsha)
2004 Publication of artbook "INTRON DEPOT 4 – BULLETS" (Seishinsha)
2006 Anime project "G3" starts (later to become Ghost Hound and RD produced by Production I.G.)
2008 Illustration of the novel "Classical Fantasy Within" by Shimada Soji, 7 out of 12 volumes published to date (Kodansha)
2009 Publication of manga trade paperback "Kokaku Kidotai 1.5 – Human Error Processor" (Kodansha)

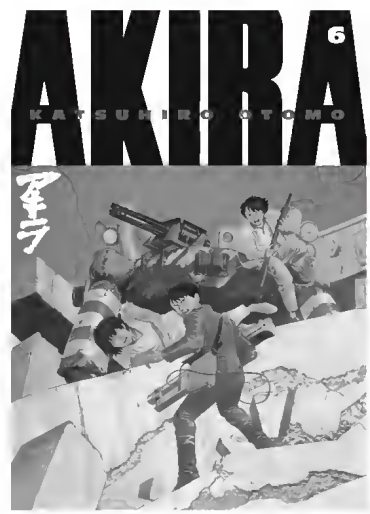



***AKIRA:*** Katsuhiro Otomo's 6-Volume Masterpiece

Neo-Tokyo is about to explode.

"One of the most important manga of the 1980s... four stars."
Manga: The Complete Guide

KC KODANSHA COMICS

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